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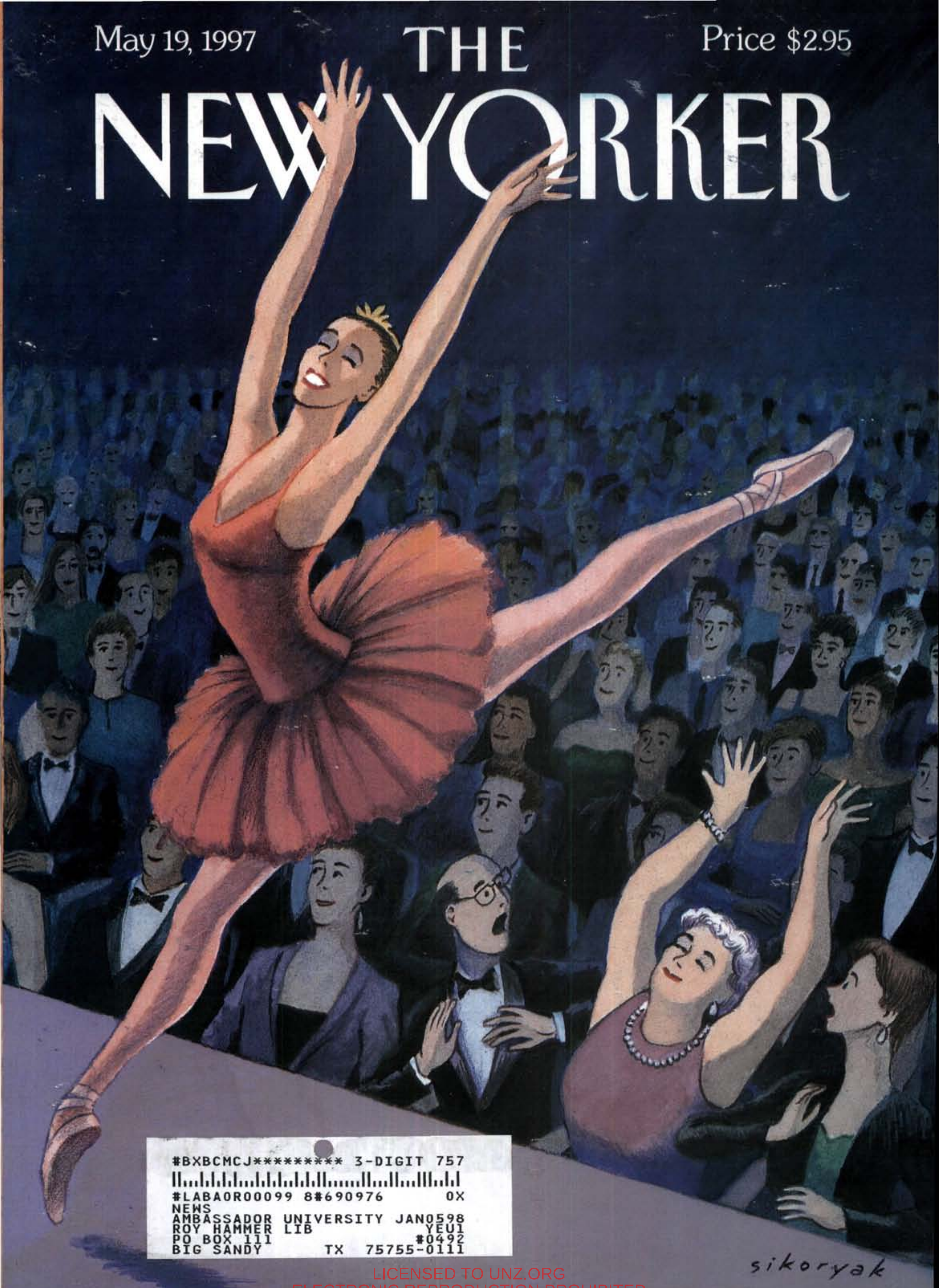

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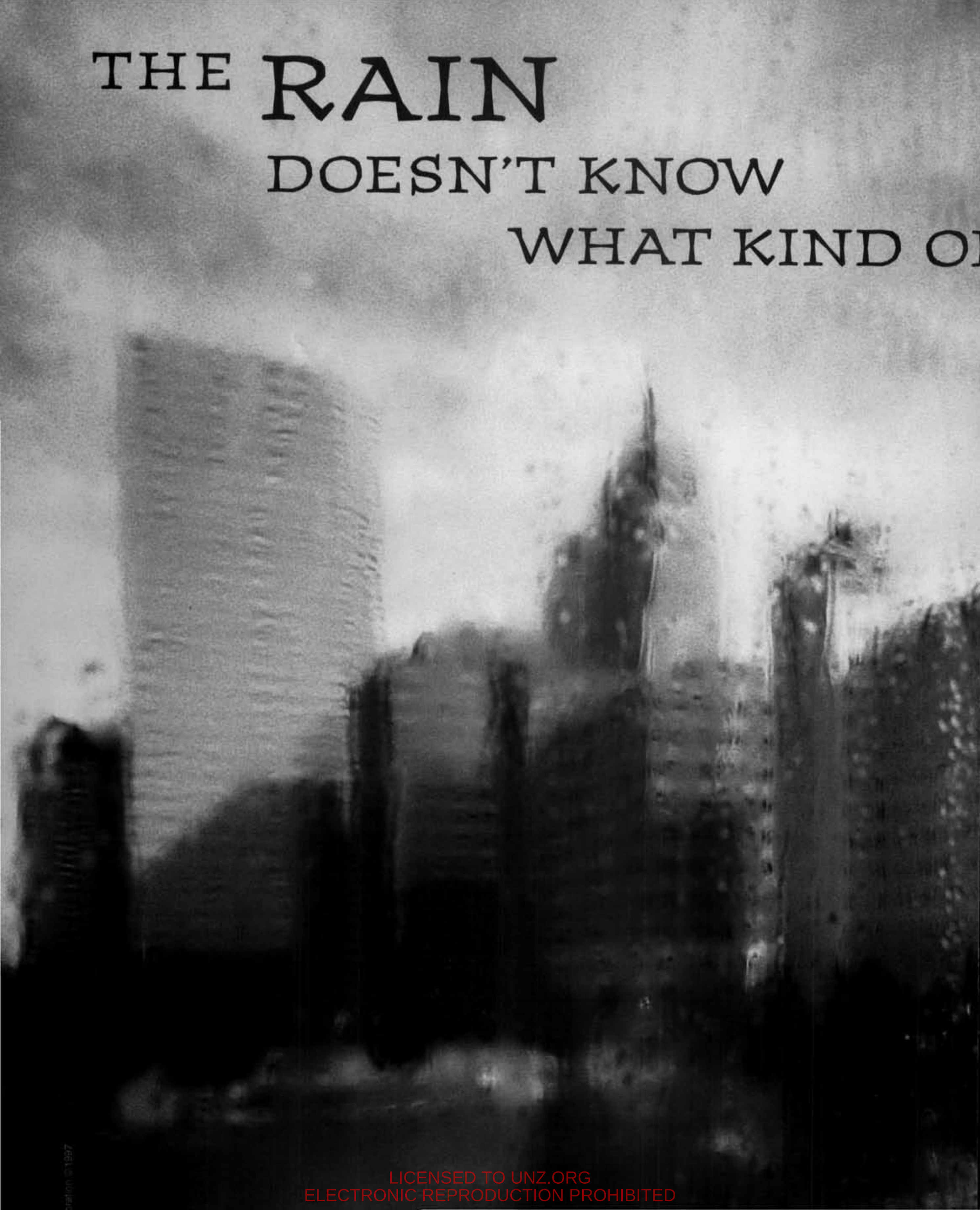
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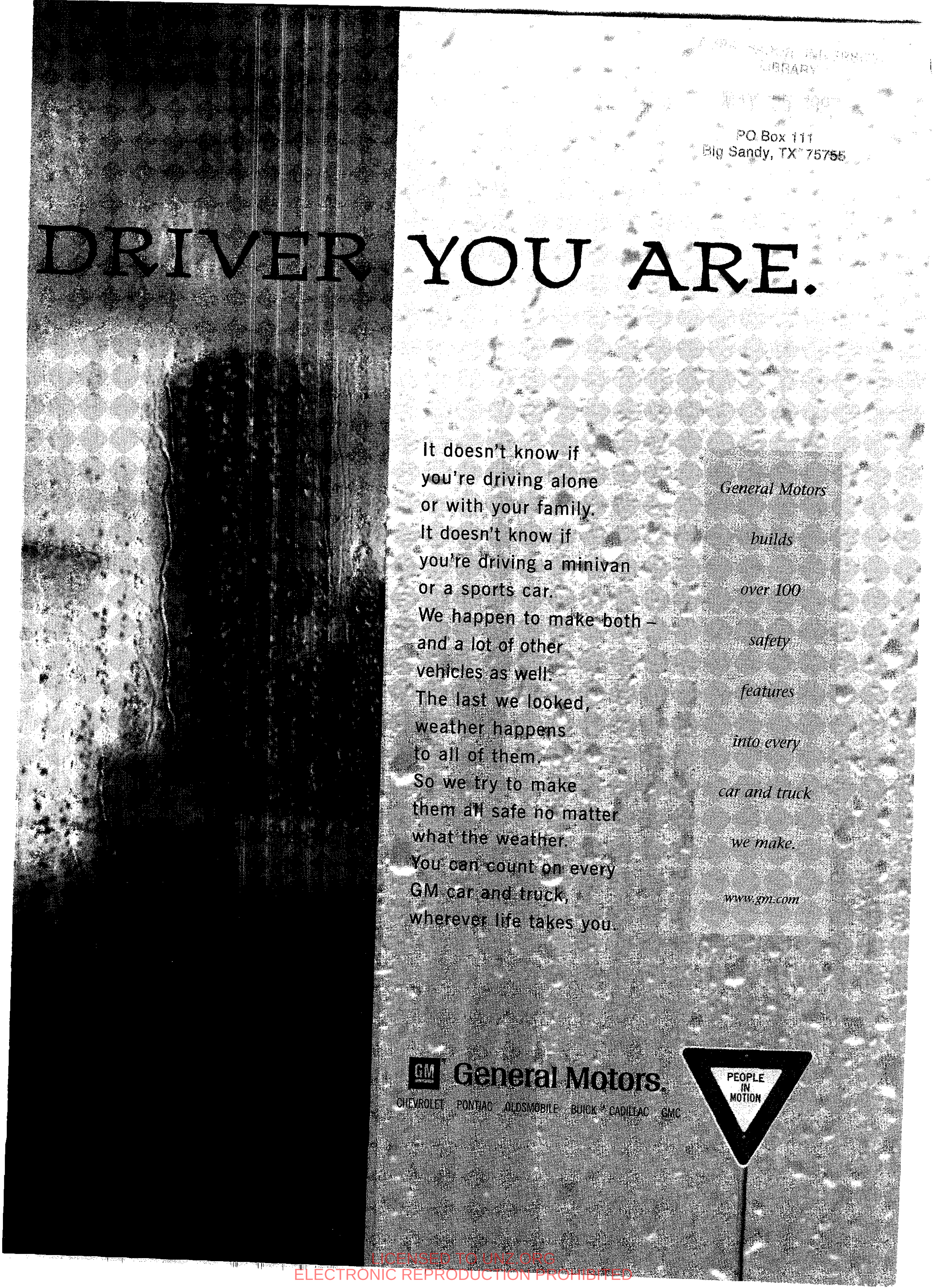

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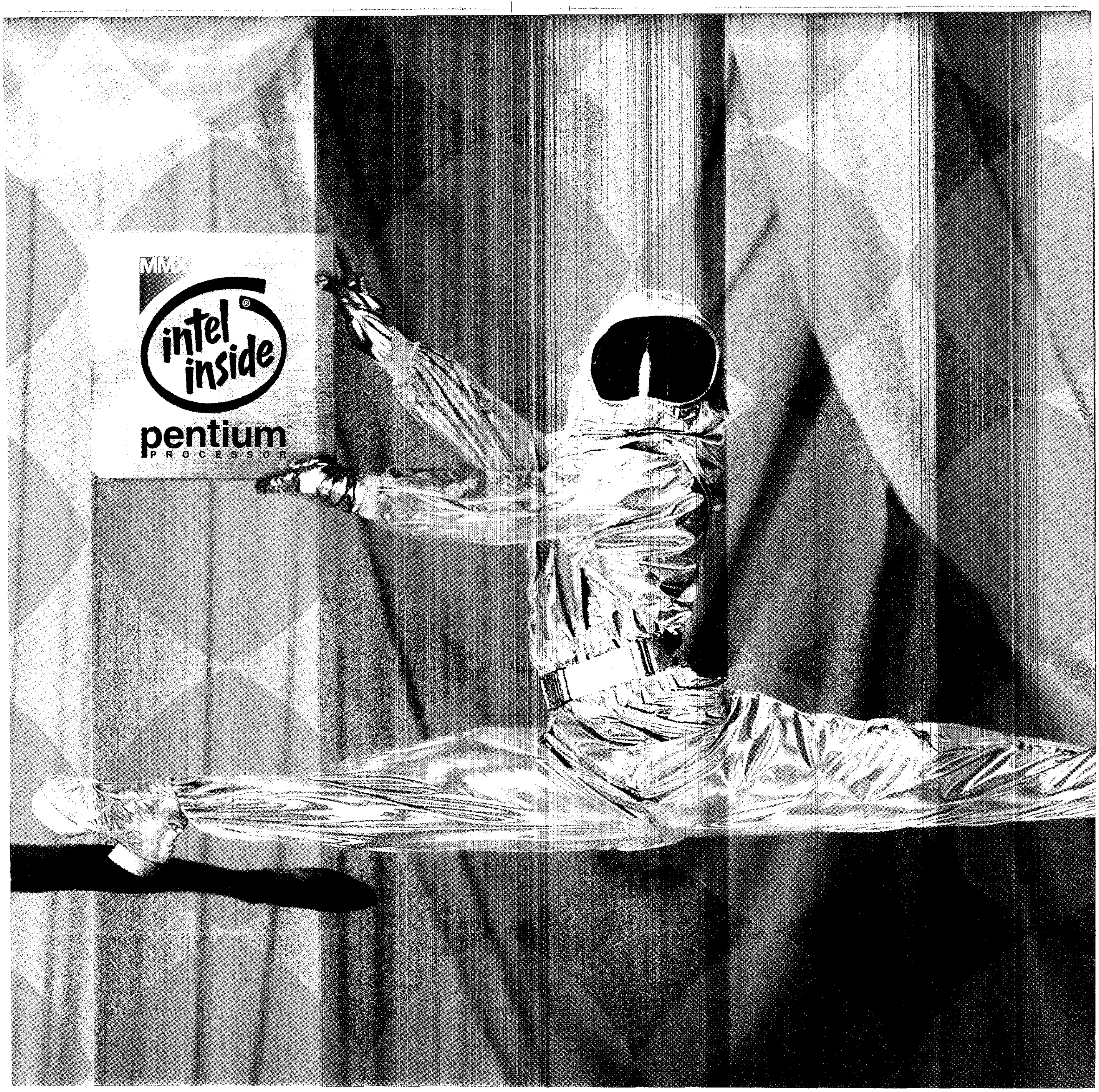
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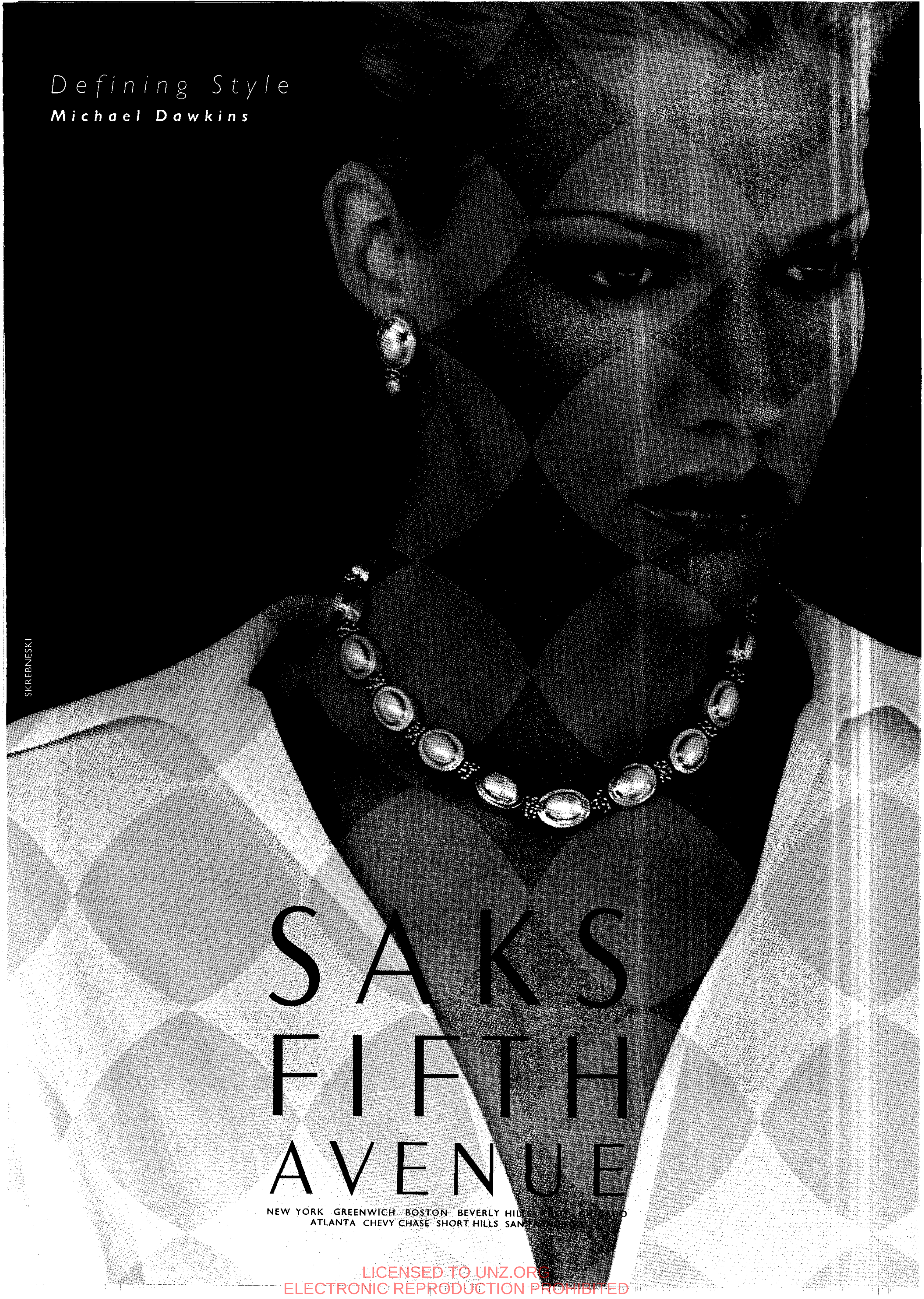
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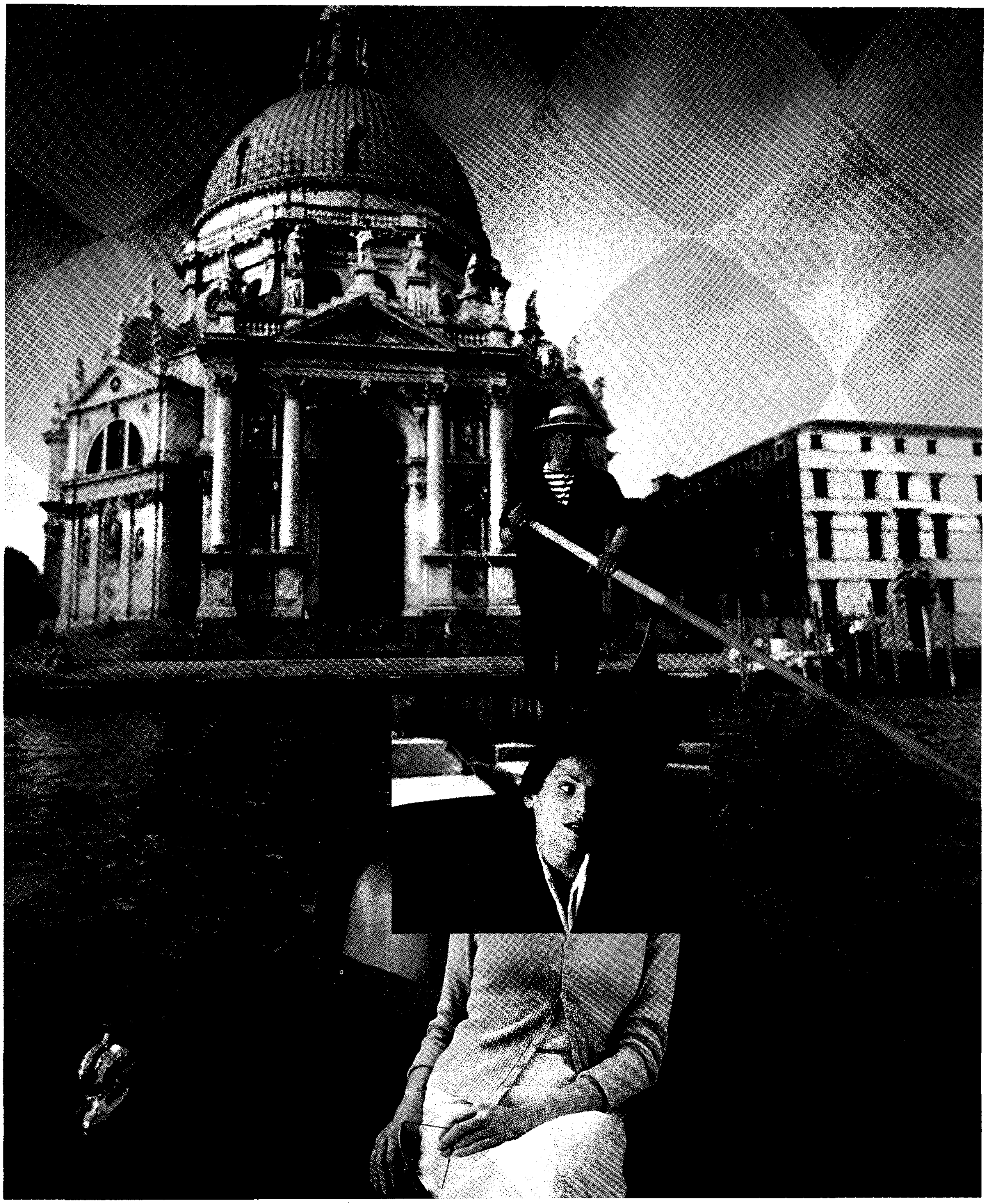

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COMMENT

KABILA'S MARCH

Zaire's rebels confront the West's legacy.

IN 1960, Patrice Lumumba, the first post-independence leader of what had been the Belgian Congo, asked Moscow for help in putting down an insurrection. President Eisenhower's C.I.A. chief, Allen Dulles, anxious to prevent the Congo's vast mineral deposits from falling into the wrong hands, decided that Lumumba should be eliminated, and dispatched a physician with a syringe full of poison to do the job. As it happened, Lumumba's American-backed domestic enemies got there first, and Washington eventually found his replacement in a journalist-turned-soldier called Joseph Mobutu, who, after seizing power in 1965, renamed the country Zaire and himself Mobutu Sese Seko Kuku Ngbendu Wa Za Banga. (It means "the all-powerful warrior who, by his endurance and will to win, goes from conquest to conquest, leaving fire in his wake.") Mobutu's reign of oppression and pillage lasted until last week, when, dying of cancer and with a rebel army at his heels, he boarded a plane for what appears to be a final exile.

Mobutu ranks high among twentieth-century monsters, and he is our monster. Long after his Cold War utility expired, Washington indulged his outrages, and whenever our enthusiasm flagged the French eagerly took up the slack. Why did we stand by him? Out of fear of what might come in his wake. The spectre of post-Mobutu Zaire that haunts Washington and Paris is essentially a cross between Albanian-style anarchy and Rwandan-style bloodshed among fifty million people strewn across a Western Europe-size jungle. In this vision, Mobutu's dismal character is mistakenly projected onto his subjects. Despite the defiantly determined spirit of the great mass of Zaireans—who have gone on procreating, schooling, praying, and trading, and debating with some eloquence their prospects for political emancipation—the international journalistic and diplomatic discourse is choked with words like "ungovernable" and "hellhole" and with references to the penumbral savagery of Conrad's riverboat tale. It's almost as if we *wanted* Zaire to be the Heart of Darkness; perhaps the notion suits our understanding of the natural order of nations.

The revolt that has finally knocked Zaire out from under Mobutu began seven months ago, in the east, among Zairean Tutsis whom Mobutu's government, making common cause with the forces that had visited genocide on neighboring Rwanda, was trying to extirpate from land they had

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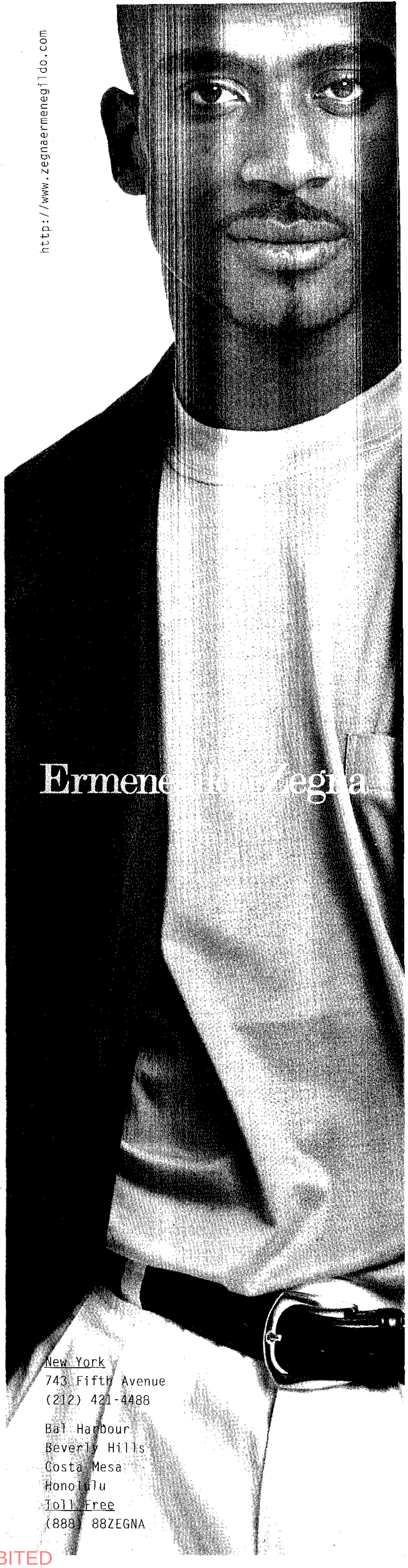
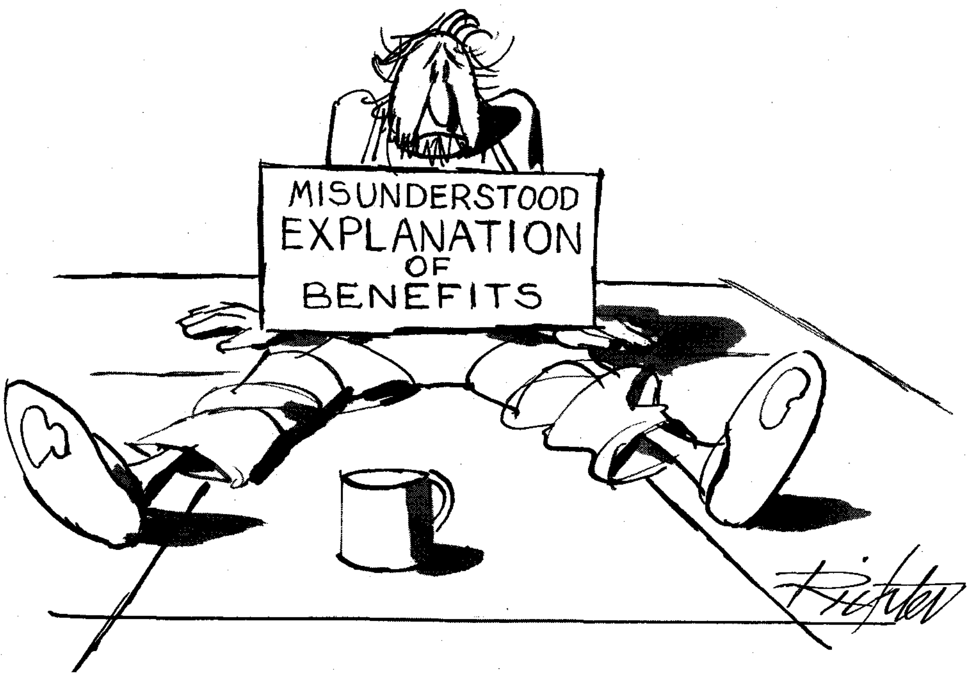




inhabited for centuries. When the international community did nothing about this latest horror, Rwanda backed an uprising, and it swiftly turned into the army known as the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire, led by Laurent-Desiré Kabila. At the end of last week, A.D.F.L. forces were closing in on Kinshasa, the Zairean capital, completing one of the most astoundingly rapid and massive military conquests of our times.

The tenor of Kabila's expected triumph will depend on whether he can seize Kinshasa without allowing it to be laid waste. As the A.D.F.L. swept through Zaire, Mobutu's soldiers did what they have always done best. Fleeing rather than fighting, they raped and looted their way through town after town along the route of the rebel advance, thereby insuring a warm welcome for Kabila's self-proclaimed liberators. The only forces that Mobutu could rely on to take a stand for him along the way were the fugitive Rwandan Hutu army of genocide and Serbian mercenaries—the dregs of humanity.

Kabila, too, required foreign help to accomplish his march so efficiently. One American diplomat observed last week, "All of Zaire's neighbors, from Uganda to Angola, have been involved, because Mobutu was destabilizing them and they saw that Zaire had already collapsed, while the West was saying, 'Oh my God, what if it collapses?' " The civil war in Zaire is the most important front in a wide band of wars and political transformations now sweeping across Africa, from Eritrea, on the shore of the Red Sea, south through Sudan, Uganda, and Rwanda, and into Angola. Emerging alliances among many of these countries are defining a new chapter in African leadership, one that might be called post-postcolonial. A generation ago, when Africans spoke of "liberation" they meant freedom from the European empires. Today "liberation" means climbing out from under the client dictatorships of Cold War neocolonialism.

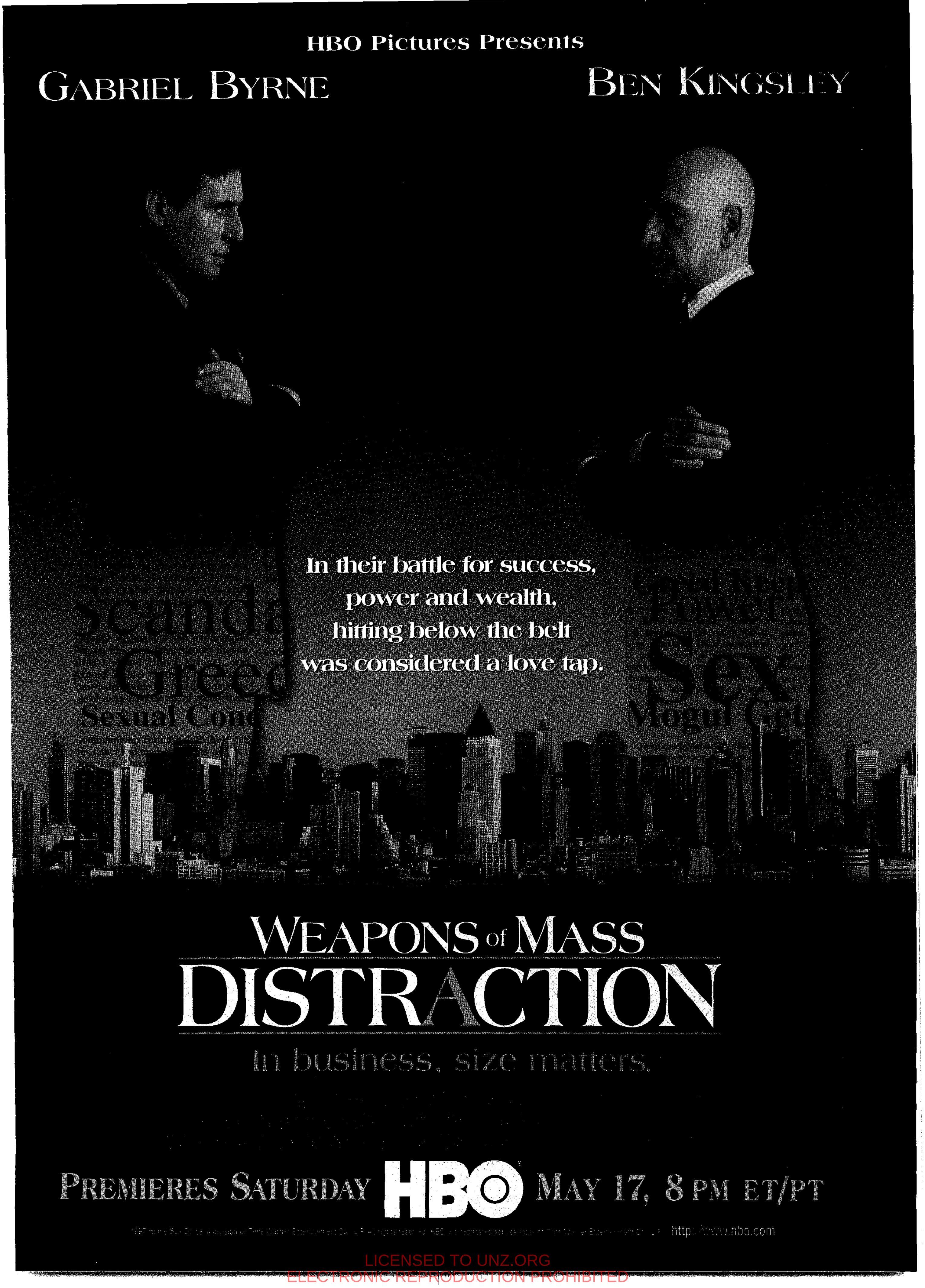
In the early days of the rebellion, Washington obstructed a French military intervention on Mobutu's behalf; as a consequence, the Clinton Administration is widely perceived as Kabila's sponsor. But if America has won any fresh influence in Zaire it has been more by default than by design. Only at the last minute did the Administration dispatch a special envoy, Ambassador Bill Richardson, to try to cajole Mobutu into retirement, in the hope of preventing a final bloodbath. Right up to the end, the Administration treated Mobutu as a credible partner in promoting elections. One of Clinton's top Africa hands recently complained that "our policy in Zaire is hamstrung by the reality on the ground"—as if the fault lay with reality.

How Kabila and his troubled alliance might govern Zaire is anybody's guess. There are reports that in many areas under rebel control local leaders are being selected by popular vote; that roads are being rendered passable for the first time in decades; that small-business prospects are looking up; and that corruption is down. Elsewhere, it is rumored, rebels have inflicted terrible human-rights abuses on Rwandan Hutus who refused to return home with the refugee masses last November.

It can be helpful to think of central Africa today as comparable to early-modern Europe—plagued by interminable tribal and religious wars, and crowded with corrupt despots, predatory élites, and a brutalized, illiterate, superstitious peasantry, festering with disease, stagnating in poverty, *and* laden with promise. Of course, one of the key processes that helped European nations pull toward greater prosperity and saner governance was colonialism, which allowed for the exporting of aggression and the importing of wealth. Ex-colonies don't enjoy such opportunities as they tumble into the family of modern nation-states. Whatever forms of government they come up with are likely to be transitional, as they struggle to build sustaining political traditions.

Last week, the *Times* headed an editorial "Tyranny or Democracy in Zaire?" The Clinton Administration also seems to see the choice that way. But it's not so simple. Politics mostly operates in the in-between realm of bad (or, if you're an optimist, better) versus worse. Kabila says that he will create a government of national unity, excluding only Mobutists, and in due course will hold national elections. And why shouldn't he wish to fulfill the enthusiastic hopes of the people who have cheered his march?

Zaire has wealth that most emerging states can only dream of. But the going will surely be bumpy, and Zaire's war may well continue. Constructing ballot boxes won't be the first order of business. A rebel radio broadcast last week noted that a new government will have "to take up the challenge left by Mr. Mobutu and his decaying regime, to build up this country which has been crushed to a pulp." We in the West had a strong hand in the crushing, and that was the easy part of the story. It would be a shame if, in our zeal to demonstrate our contrition, we blamed Mobutu's heirs for the legacy we did so much to create. —PHILIP GOUREVITCH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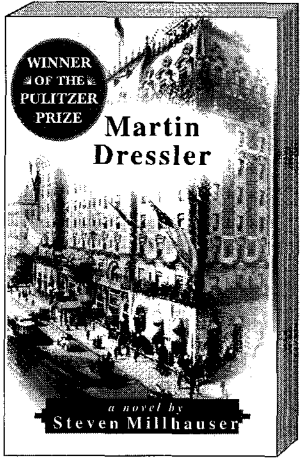

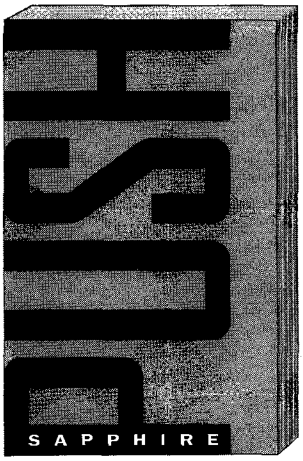

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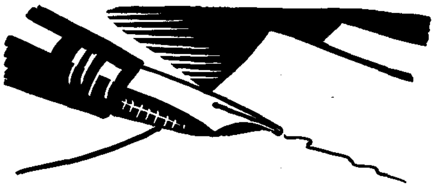

SCHOOL DAZE

James Atlas's essay about complaining, overworked private-school parents ("Making the Grade," April 14th) manages to suggest that private schools are an expensive way for the parents to enjoy being with other privileged people. As for their sequestered children's education, Atlas concedes that they "don't get what regular life is really like." But homework assignments such as writing a paper on "class consciousness in Victorian England" don't do much to close the reality gap. An essay on class consciousness in contemporary America would be more relevant, but this might not thrill parents intent on guarding against the enemy—the kids who aren't in private schools.

FREDERICK WILLMAN
San Francisco, Calif.

My own experience with the private schools that Mr. Atlas describes is limited to studying with the products of those schools at a private college. The private-schoolers whom I've encountered have almost uniformly suffered from two deficiencies. First, their high-school workload having been much heavier than mine, they had rarely engaged in self-motivated, nonpurposeful study or reading. Second, having been exposed at an early age to such topics as "Islamic medicine in the Middle Ages" and to lectures by the famous and talented among their peers' parents, they had ceased to be excited by learning. In other words, school had been their full-time job for so long that they regarded it as just that: a vocation, rather than an avocation.

TOM KELLOGG
Hoboken, N.J.

There is something quite disturbing about James Atlas's view of parenthood. Was he hoping that as one of the fortunate few who are able to send their children to private schools he could stop being a full-time parent? Are we to feel sorry for his children, who have the opportunity to attend art classes at MOMA and concerts at Avery Fisher Hall? He seems to long for a simpler place and time. That place and time still exist outside New York—for instance, in the New England mill town where the acquaintance he mentions no doubt grew up longing for escape to the glamour of Manhattan.

EDITH T. RATHBONE
Cambridge, Mass.

Mr. Atlas points out that public schools are getting poorer, and that public-school parents struggling to make ends meet are unable to help out as much as private-school parents do. Atlas sees the problem, but there's a connection he isn't making. The worse the public schools get, the harder the parents of private-school children fight to keep privileges, and the more justified they feel in refusing to share their wealth and the opportunities they enjoy in any meaningful way. "My kids *have* to succeed," Atlas says, even if that means ghettoizing poor kids. As John Kenneth Galbraith wrote, "In an atmosphere of private opulence and public squalor, the private goods have full sway."

JOYCE FULLER
New York City

LOST IN TRANSLATION?

Someone reading Peter J. Boyer's "American Guanxi" (April 14th) might get the idea that the Chinese word *guanxi* invariably refers to the use of undue influence, but this is a little like saying that "the family" invariably means "the Mafia." *Guanxi* is an outgrowth of a Confucian attempt to establish a scale of probable trustworthiness. Like any system, it can be abused. In China, when businesspeople must deal with someone they don't know they often ask a *guanxi* contact to certify the trustworthiness of that person. For this reason, it sometimes happens that an American working with a Chinese businessman finds himself in the odd position of assuring that man that if he does business with, say, the Chase Manhattan Bank it can certainly be trusted.

FRANK HOLAN
Westminster, Vt.

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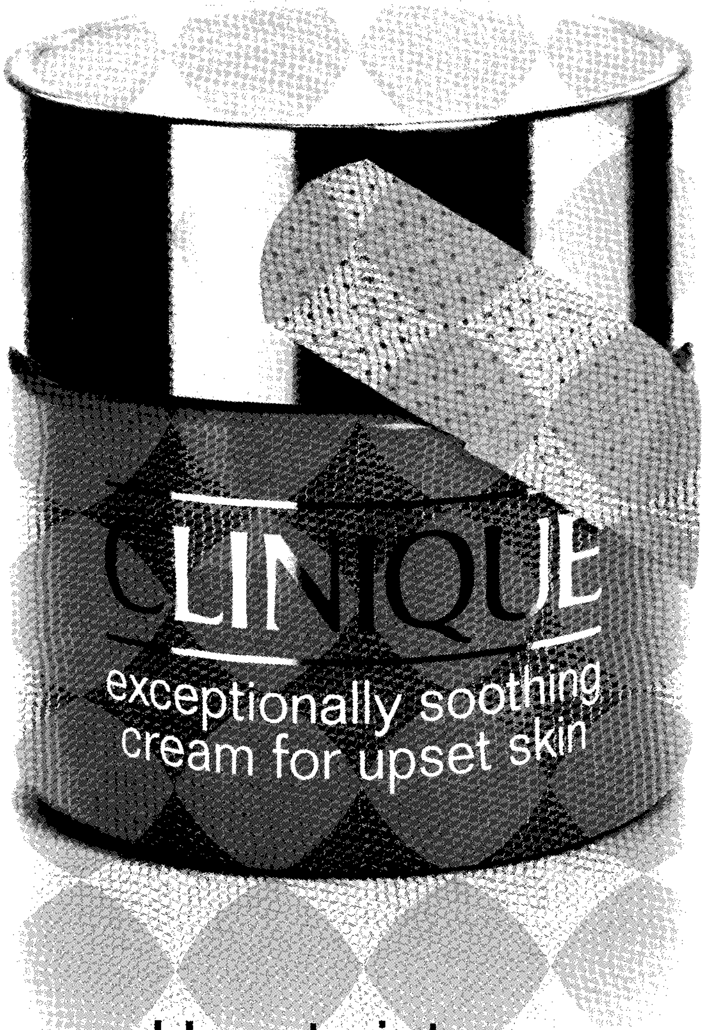

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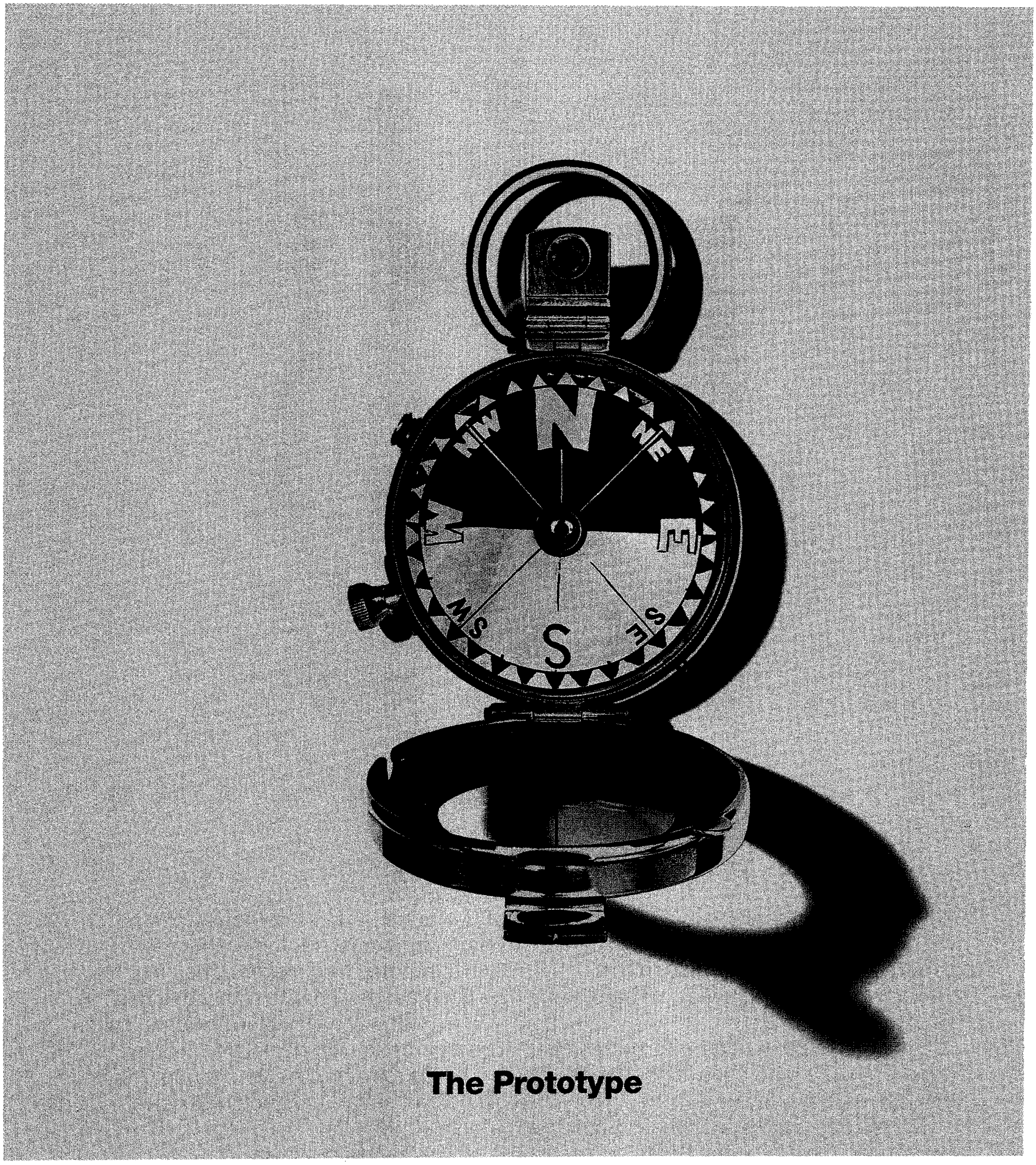

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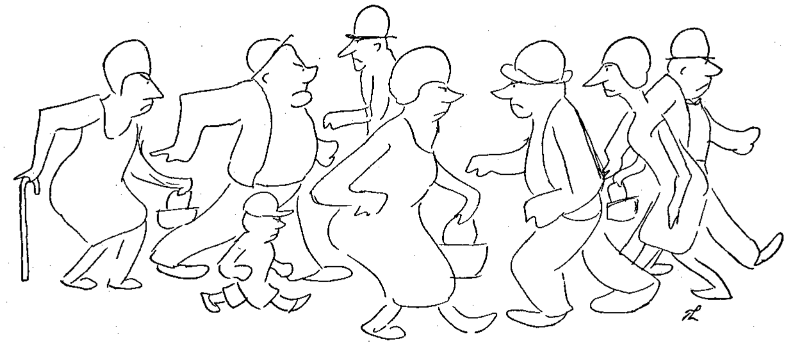

THE THEATRE

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.)

Collected Stories—A drama by Donald Margulies, about an aging writer (Maria Tucci) and her talented protégée (Debra Messing). In previews through May 18. Opens May 20 at 6:45. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

The Devils—Dostoyevsky's novel was the inspiration for Elizabeth Egloff's new play. In previews. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 460-5475.)

King David—More than ninety performers take the stage in this limited-run concert production of Alan Menken and Tim Rice's musical. Previews May 15-17. Opens May 18 at 6:30 and continues through May 23. (New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.)

OPENED RECENTLY

All My Sons—The Roundabout Theatre Company presents Arthur Miller's 1947 drama. (Laura Pels, Broadway at 45th St. 869-8400.)

An American Daughter—In the latest installment of Wendy Wasserstein's continuing examination of American womanhood, a doctor (Kate Nelligan) undergoing confirmation hearings for the post of Surgeon General gets run through the wringer by the media. It's a moving, compelling drama that resonates beyond the feminist arena; the production is fine, the casting near-perfect, and the direction, by Daniel Sullivan, admirably sensitive. (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

Annie—Can the powerhouse waif find another bonanza in this twentieth-anniversary revival of her Broadway musical? With eight-year-old Brittny Kissinger wearing the red fright wig, anything is possible: no one ever went broke underestimating the intelligence of the New York public. Directed by Martin Charnin. (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Barrymore—Christopher Plummer's rich, unmiked voice hits every note of sarcasm and self-loathing in William Luce's rambunctious script as he perfectly captures the grief behind the old ham's gallant frivolity. Well directed by Gene Saks. (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Bermuda Avenue Triangle—A new comedy, about two retirement-community widows who fall under the spell of a mysterious man, written by Renee Taylor and Joseph Bologna, who co-star with Nanette Fabray. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 580-1313.)

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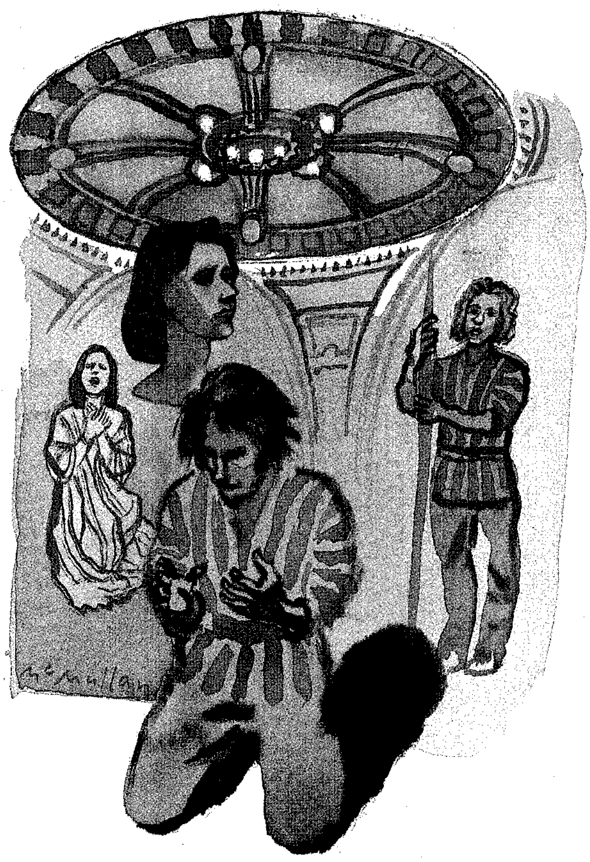
Bunny Bunny—In this comedy by Alan Zweibel (one of the original "Saturday Night Live" writers) about his friendship with Gilda Radner, who died of cancer in 1989, Paula Cale and the excellent Bruno Kirby are likable as the leads, but a young actor named Alan Tudyk, playing twenty-odd bit parts, steals the show. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 239-6200. Closes May 25.)

Candide—Hal Prince's new staging of the 1956 adaptation of Voltaire's novel, with music by Leonard Bernstein. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 307-4100.)

The Chairs—Ionesco's early absurdist farce, presented by the Pearl Theatre Company. (80 St. Marks Pl. 598-9802. Closes June 1.)

Corn—The Ridiculous Theatrical Company's revival of its 1972 musical, about the Hatfields and the McCoys. The talented cast is energetic and charming, but the book is weak, and the evening drags from time to time. (Chelsea Playhouse, 125 W. 22nd St. 307-4100.)



Alice Ripley, Judy Kuhn, Marcus Lovett, and Anthony Galde, in "King David."

JAMES McMULLAN

Curse of the Starving Class—Say what you will about Sam Shepard's rootless, aimless, broken-down families—but not until you see the Signature Theatre Company's keen production of his 1978 play. It wisely draws its power as much from pathos as from shock, portraying the characters as human beings crying out for solace they're not going to get rather than as animals yelping in pain. And it's a rich experience, thanks in particular to Deborah Hedwall, as a mother who can no longer muster any motherliness, and Jude Ciccolella, as a mean, sad, but funny drunk of a father whose rants become soliloquies. A mostly fine supporting cast, a high-lonesome set, evocative lighting, and witty sound (a refrigerator so empty that it echoes) add the finishing touches. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 239-6200. Closes May 25.)

The Disputation—A historical drama by Hyam Maccoby, adapted from his 1982 book, "Judaism on Trial." (Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 831-2000. Closes May 18.)

A Doll's House—A thrilling version of Ibsen's play, imported from the West End. Anthony Page's scrupulous, sensitive direction catches all the music and irony in the collusion between Nora (masterfully played by Janet McTeer) and her husband, Torvald (the passionate Owen Teale). (Reviewed in our issue of 4/14/97.) (Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Dream—A train wreck of a tribute to the great lyricist Johnny Mercer, in which only the singer Margaret Whiting and the singing jazz guitarist John Pizzarelli get out alive. (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Ensemble Studio Theatre—Series A of this year's six-week marathon of one-acts runs through May 18, with plays by Will Scheffer, Cherie Vogelstein, Edward Allan Baker, and Robert Kerr. The marathon continues through June 15. (549 W. 52nd St. 247-3405.)

The Gin Game—Julie Harris and Charles Durning shine in the National Actors Theatre's funny, poignant revival of D. L. Coburn's 1977 play, about two elderly people who discover an antidote to their loneliness in a card game. Charles Nelson Reilly directed. (Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

God's Heart—The action in Craig Lucas's incoherent new play consists mostly of a series of dreams, with a supercomputer, some lesbians, and a couple of murders thrown into the plot. Mr. Lucas seems to be trying to say something about notions of loss and identity in a postmodern world, but he hasn't succeeded. Directed by Joe Mantello. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200. Closes May 25.)

The Gypsy and the Yellow Canary—Irene Worth's solo performance of her adaptation of the Prosper Mérimée narrative is a showcase for her elegant artistry, but it's not always gripping as storytelling. The moments when Worth fully inhabits a character—showing us Don José's recognition of his folly, or the lovers' passion, or Carmen's defiance just before he kills her—are brilliant. But precisely because she's playing all the characters (and Don José, as the narrator, too), the show feels more like a collection of those moments than like a full-fledged tragedy. At the same time, it's too fleshed out for a story read aloud. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 239-6200. Closes May 18.)

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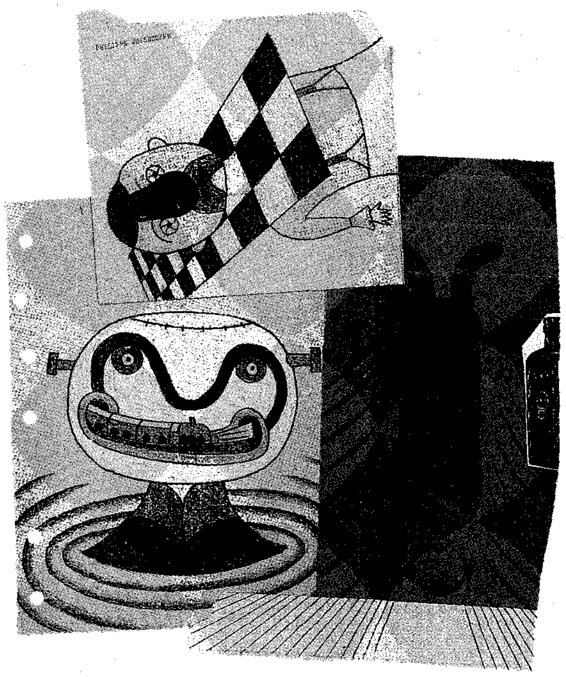
The Hairy Ape—In the Wooster Group's production of Eugene O'Neill's 1922 Expressionist drama, Willem Dafoe, who plays a stoker on an ocean liner, gives an astonishing performance that's both finely tuned and boiling over with raw, wild rage, and every element of the production contributes to its power. Elizabeth LeCompte directed. (Selwyn, 229 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. Closes May 25.)

Hajj—A performance poem featuring Ruth Maleczech, presented by Mabou Mines. (Toronado, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 473-1991. Closes June 1.)

How I Learned to Drive—Paula Vogel's memory play, about a young woman (Mary-Louise Parker) who comes of age too quickly under the tutelage of her pedophile uncle (David Morse), is a clear-eyed marvel. Under the excellent direction of Mark Brokaw, both Ms. Parker and Mr. Morse give captivating, sympathetic performances. (Century Theatre, 111 E. 15th St. 239-6200.)

Jekyll & Hyde—Enjoyable bombast, loosely based on the Robert Louis Stevenson novel, with music by Frank Wildhorn and lyrics and a book by Leslie Bricusse. Oedipal and romantic elements have been added to the story, and the result is less a meditation on the duality of man's nature than it is an overheated parable of narcissistic isolation (something that adolescents of all ages can identify with): this Dr. Jekyll (Robert Cuccioli) sings a lot of songs with lyrics like "I do not know what I seek, but I'll seek it alone." While there is much here to laugh at, the show exerts an undeniable pull, aided by the solid direction of Robin Phillips and the lovely voices of Linda Eder and Christiane Noll, who more than do justice to Wildhorn's melodies. (5/12/97) (Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

The Joy of Going Somewhere Definite—Quincy Long's play, in which three aimless, unemployed loggers (Guy Boyd, J. R. Horne, and Jordan Lage) get saddled with a mystery drunk, is hilarious, and, in the end, quietly moving. Directed by William H. Macy. (Atlantic, 336 W. 20th St. 239-6200. Closes May 17.)



John Moran's "Every Day Newt Burman," at La Mama.

PHILIPPE WEISBECKER

La Mama—May 15-18 at 7:30: "Every Day Newt Burman," a Ridge Theatre revival of John Moran's techno-opera. Through May 25. . . . ¶ May 15-17 at 10: "Faith and Dancing: Mapping Femininity and Other Natural Disasters," an autobiographical solo piece by Lois Weaver. Through May 25. (74A E. 4th St. 475-7710.)

The Last Night of Ballyhoo—In this romantic comedy of manners, set in Atlanta in 1939, Alfred Uhry stays true to a Southern sense of propriety: he takes on an unsavory topic (anti-Semitism among the Jewish upper crust) without dwelling on it long enough to offend anyone, and, like a practiced host, he shows you a good time without taxing you. Ron Lagomarsino directed. (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 307-4100.)

The Life—This new musical about the oldest profession in Times Square before it became known as the new Times Square (surely you remember all those singing hookers you used to pass on your way to the theatre) and the men who profit from its practitioners is a cynical, poisonous concoction, featuring phony funk, fake blues, overcooked pop, and a cartoonish, insulting book—all from a group of theatrical veterans who should have known better. Cy Coleman wrote the music; Ira Gasman wrote the lyrics. The book is by Coleman, Gasman, and David Newman. Directorial blame goes to Michael Blakemore. The game cast includes some good singers, notably Lillias White and Pamela Isaacs. (5/12/97) (Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

The Little Foxes—Lillian Hellman's 1939 drama about an unscrupulous Southern family of industrialists. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

London Assurance—Brian Bedford has the lead in Dion Boucicault's 1841 comedy. (Roundabout, Broadway at 45th St. 869-8400.)

Mere Mortals and Others—Six one-act comedies by David Ives. (Primary Stages, 354 W. 45th St. 333-4052. Closes June 1.)

Once Upon a Mattress—That modern madcap Sarah Jessica Parker shines as the princess in Gerald Gutierrez's revival of Mary Rodgers's silly, marshmallowy 1959 musical. (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

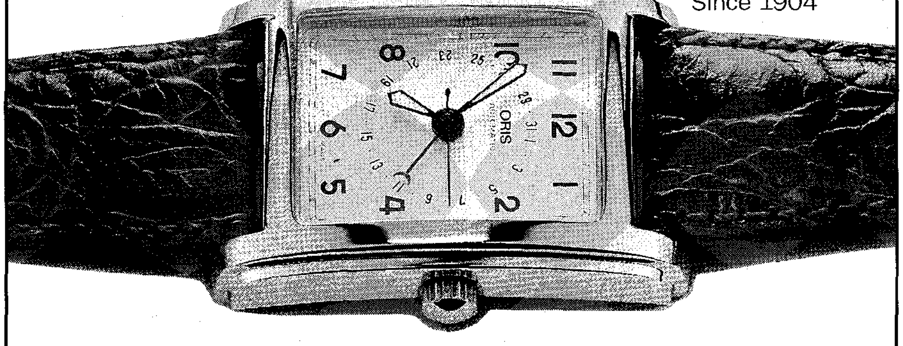
Steel Pier—John Kander and Fred Ebb's first new musical since "Kiss of the Spider Woman" takes place at a dance marathon in Atlantic City in 1933: it's a slick Depression fantasy with imagery and ideas that have long been overused in movies and television. Stale, hand-me-down authenticity also infects Susan Stroman's choreography, which is a virtual checklist of the thirties' dance crazes, and the plot, which revolves around a daredevil pilot (Daniel McDonald) and a sweet, innocent girl (Karen Ziemba) who is treated badly by her gold-digging husband (Gregory Harrison). Debra Monk, as a brassy, bawdy dame, has a brief shining (if not quite dazzling) moment when she sings a dirty little crowd-pleasing number called "I'm Everybody's Girl." (5/12/97) (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100.)

Stonewall Jackson's House—Jonathan Reynolds's comedy, about a woman who pushes the racial envelope, hits all its targets—from multiculturalism to the misuses of history—with deadly aim, and the versatile cast is hilarious. (American Place, 111 W. 46th St. 239-6200.)

Sympathetic Magic—In Second Stage's spare, well-acted production of Lanford Wilson's inscrutable yet oddly satisfying new play, eight characters proceed through two chaotic yet graceful acts, the events of which, both extraordinary and commonplace, seem to imply that a very important message lies buried within. But, just as in real life, it's hard to figure out what that message is and whether we should even bother trying. And then it's over. Marshall W. Mason is the director. (Second Stage, Broadway at 76th St. 239-6200. Closes May 18.)

Tap Dogs—Australia's work-booted tap troupe. (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 307-4100.)

Titanic—Though this musical about history's most tragic maiden voyage contains no small number of historical and theatrical misjudgments (and technical problems), it nevertheless manages to take you very close to the heart of the matter—the enormity of the disas-



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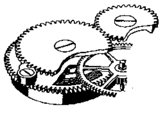

ter and its heartbreaking human details—and it qualifies as a genuine addition to American musical theatre. Richard Jones, who directed, and Stewart Laing, who designed the sets, have established an operatic atmosphere that minimizes the flaws in Peter Stone's book and Maury Yeston's music and lyrics; miraculously, the show steers clear of both the Scylla of camp and the Charybdis of bad taste, and the result is an evening that's both sombre and joyful, grave and entertaining. John Cunningham appears as Captain Smith, David Garrison as the chairman of the White Star Line, and—most memorably—Brian d'Arcy James as a stoker, Martin Moran as a wireless operator, and Victoria Clark as a celebrity-obsessed second-class passenger. (5/12/97) (Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 307-4100.)

Waiting for Lefty—That capitalism doesn't always work is one of the reasons Clifford Odets' 1935 proletarian drama, set during a union meeting of desperate Depression-era taxi drivers, still can when it's given a chance. In this bighearted, naturalistic staging by the Blue Light Theatre Company, under the direction of Joanne Woodward, it does. As the play flashes back on the events in several of the drivers' lives leading up to a strike, it remains as uneven as ever, and it's easy to see it today as an agitprop museum piece. But the fine actors—especially Marisa Tomei and PJ Brown—tap into its universal core: the desire for human dignity and the uplift of solidarity. (Classic Stage Company, 136 E. 13th St. 279-4200. Closes May 25.)

Yiddle with a Fiddle—A musical comedy based on the 1936 Polish film "Yidl mitn Fidl." (American Jewish Theatre, 307 W. 26th St. 633-9797. Closes May 25.)

The Young Man from Atlanta—Horton Foote's Pulitzer Prize-winning drama, set in Houston in 1950, with powerful performances by Rip Torn and Shirley Knight, as a couple whose only child killed himself six months earlier. The wife won't face the issue of suicide; the husband won't face the issue of homosexuality. The audience gets the point within the first ten minutes and then spends the next two hours waiting for the light to come on in the couple's befogged minds. Robert Falls is the director. (4/14/97) (Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

The Wizard of Oz—Oh, my! Roseanne makes her stage début, as the Wicked Witch of the West, in a Madison Square Garden production. (307-4111. Closes June 1.)

LONG RUNS

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST: Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4100. . . . **BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES:** Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. . . . **BRING IN DA NOISE, BRING IN DA FUNK:** Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 239-6200. . . . **CATS:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. . . . **CHICAGO:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. . . . **FORBIDDEN BROADWAY STRIKES BACK!:** Triad, 158 W. 72nd St. 799-4599. . . . **FULL GALLOP:** Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200. . . . **A FUNNY THING HAPPENED ON THE WAY TO THE FORUM:** St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **GRANDMA SYLVIA'S FUNERAL:** SoHo Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 691-1555. . . . **HOWARD CRABTREE'S WHEN PIGS FLY:** Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. . . . **I LOVE YOU, YOU'RE PERFECT, NOW CHANGE:** Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200. . . . **JOSEPH GABRIEL: MAGIC ON BROADWAY:** Lamb's, 130 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE KING AND I:** Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100. . . . **LATE NITE CATECHISM:** St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200. . . . **MASTER CLASS:** Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **MISS SAIGON:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200. . . . **PERFECT CRIME:** Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401. . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **RENT:** Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000. . . . **ROB BECKER'S DEFENDING THE CAVEMAN:** Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 307-4100. . . . **SMOKEY JOE'S CAFÉ:** Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200. . . . **STOMP:** Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at St. Marks Pl. 477-2477. . . . **TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING:** St. John's Church, 81 Christopher St. 279-4200. . . . **VICTOR/VICTORIA:** Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100.

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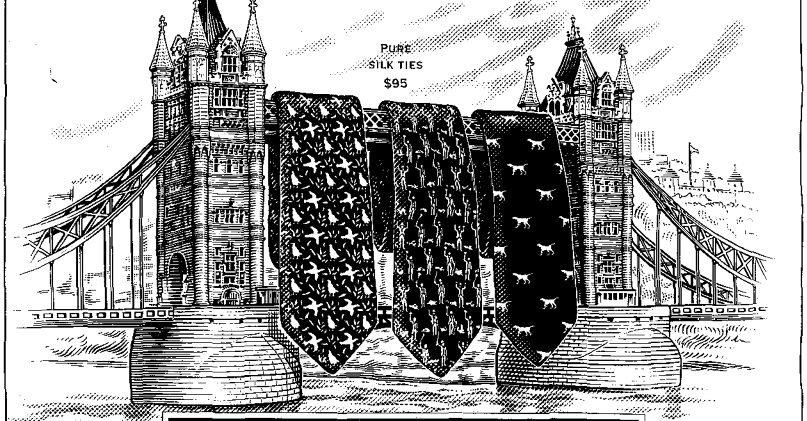

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DANCE

New York City Ballet—May 14 at 8: "Scotch Symphony," "The Cage," "Other Dances," and "Cortège Hongrois."... ¶ May 15 at 8: "Stravinsky Violin Concerto," "Prodigal Son," and "Cortège Hongrois."... ¶ May 16 at 8: "Ballo della Regina," "A Suite of Dances," "Apollo," and "Fearful Symmetries."... ¶ May 17 at 2: "Scotch Symphony," "The Cage," "Other Dances," and "Agon."... ¶ May 17 at 8: Though a flock of today's younger choreographers divide their time between ballet and modern dance, very few can play on either side of the fence as well as Kevin O'Day. Consider his distinguished but divided pedigree: Twyla Tharp, the Joffrey and the Frankfurt ballet companies, and American Ballet Theatre. "Open Strings," his fifth creation for City Ballet, opens this year's Diamond Project, the series of works the company premières every other spring season. The new piece displays O'Day's genius for casting as well as his taste for romance: the dancers include his fiancée, Stacey Calvert, as well as Albert Evans, Nilas Martins, Alexander Ritter, and Wendy Whelan—a team that can do credit to O'Day's sense of rhythm, his attack, and, last but not least, his onstage suavity. With "Prodigal Son" and "Brandenburg."... ¶ May 18 at 3: "Apollo," "Agon," and "Fearful Symmetries."... ¶ May 20 at 8: "Interplay," "A Suite of Dances," "Open Strings," and "Stravinsky Violin Concerto." (New York State Theatre. 870-5570. Through June 29.)

American Ballet Theatre—May 14 and May 17 at 2 and 8 and May 15-16 at 8: "Swan Lake."... ¶ May 19-20 at 8: "Cinderella." (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000. Through July 5.)

Jazzdance—Danny Buraczeski and his nine-member company return to the Joyce with three repertory works and the première of "Among These Cares," to a score by Roland Hanna. (175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. May 13 at 7:30, May 14-16 at 8, May 17 at 2 and 8, and May 18 at 2 and 7:30.)

Merce Cunningham Tribute—An all-star roster turns out to honor the dancer and choreographer: crowded in the wings will be Mikhail Baryshnikov (he'll perform a piece he learned from the master himself), Twyla Tharp, Trisha Brown, Mark Morris, Meredith Monk, and Bill Irwin, among others. Irwin's inclusion indicates the widespread nature of what might be termed the Cunningham guru factor. The clown and the choreographer have much in common: a physical comic's timing, a Beckettian turn of mind, roots that stretch back to vaudeville (the teen-age Merce first tramped the boards with his home-town teacher, Mrs. Maude M. Barrett, who could walk on her hands—all the modernism followed later), and, of course, a mutual admiration. Cunningham's career will be reviewed on a video wall, and his own company will round out the offerings with a performance of "Sounddance," one of this century's marvels. (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100. May 19 at 8.)

Fourth Dimension Dance—Choreographer Ryan Sang-Wook Park and his eight-member company present "Omen," "Libra," and "See Now." (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 924-0077. May 14-17 at 8:30.)

"Folding Time"—Former David Parsons dancer Gail Gilbert and an ad-hoc company of nine dancers perform ten new works by Gilbert, to an original score by the trio Rex Ordinaire, who will perform. (Evolving Arts Theatre, 622 Broadway, at Houston St. 505-3764. May 16 at 9, May 17 at 8, and May 18 at 4 and 7.)

"Don't Just Do Something, Stand There"—David Neumann, inspired by an epiphany from his college days, premières an untitled solo, then collaborates with club dancers Archie Burnett and Brahms La Fortune in "Appropriate Behavior." (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288. May 16-18 at 8:30. Through May 25.)

"Body of Art"—The erotic performance series, curated by Dianne Aldrich, concludes its first year with Carolee Schneemann's "Enter ... Vulva." (Context Hall, 28 Avenue A, at 2nd St. 967-7711, ext. 4787. May 20 at 8.

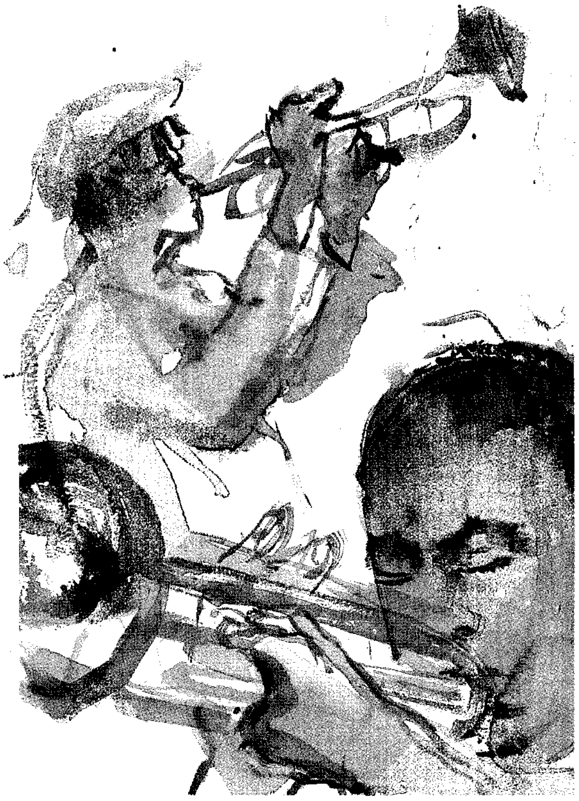
NIGHT LIFE

CONCERTS

Rosanne Cash—Last year's "Ten Song Demo" made it easy to understand why Johnny Cash's smoky-voiced daughter has traded in country-music superstardom for the singer-songwriter's trade. This concert is a celebration of the hundred-and-fiftieth anniversary of St. Ann's Church. (157 Montague St., Brooklyn. 718-858-2424. May 15 at 7.)

Dave Liebman and Phil Markowitz / Ben Allison and Medicine Wheel—The accomplished soprano saxophonist Liebman performs with the pianist and composer Markowitz. Bassist Allison's band includes Ted Nash on saxophone and Frank Kimbrough on piano. The Jazz Composers Collective's final program of the season. (Jazz Performance Space, New School, 55 W. 13th St. 995-1552. May 15 at 8.)

Maceo Parker—A longtime veteran of James Brown's legendary lineups, this tenor saxophonist also spent much of the seventies as a pivotal member of George Clinton's Parliament/Funkadelic empire. Since then, he's put out a few straight-ahead jazz disks and a couple of Brown-style extravaganzas. Live, he can still thrill. With Robert Bradley's Blackwater Surprise. (Roxy, 515 W. 18th St. 307-7171. May 15 at 9.)



Doc Cheatham and Nicholas Payton, at Iridium.

DEBORAH ROSS

The Descendents—The hardcore pioneers turned formula rockers reunite after ten years. Also on the bill are Less Than Jake, Guttermouth, and Handsome. (Roseland, 239 W. 52nd St. 307-7171. May 16 at 6.)

Agnostic Front—More hardcore pioneers. (Roxy. May 17 at 5, to accommodate the eight additional bands on the bill.)

Djivan Gasparyan / George Mgrdichian—A two-part Armenian-music program performed by a grand master of the *duduk* and a virtuoso *oud* player. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400. May 17 at 8.)

Chemical Brothers—When "Dig Your Own Hole," the second record by this excellent British duo, débuted on the charts at No. 15, some people thought this propulsive, technologically enhanced instrumental dance music, labelled electronica, was going to save the ailing music business. Then it plummeted to No. 38. Don't let the downward movement deter you: the Chemical Brothers spruce up the usual monotonous thump of techno by combining the tried-and-true grooves of funk, several thick layers of rock guitar (digitally sampled, of course), and various other sonic weirdnesses. Their freestyle approach makes for orgasmic music that appeals to both dance-floor purists and mainstream rockers. The band's motto: "We want you to feel like you're on drugs, even when you're not." (Hammerstein Ballroom, Manhattan Center, 311 W. 34th St. 564-4882. May 17 at 10.)

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type indicates some of the more notable performers in town. Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it is always advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.)

Algonquin Hotel, 59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—Singer **SUSANNAH MC CORKLE** is in through June 21. Dining.

Birdland, 315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—**JIMMY SCOTT** and his trio are in May 16-17. With good reason, the singer has dropped the "Little" that used to front his name—there's nothing diminutive about his talent. Even on songs you've heard dozens of times before, Scott makes you listen for the next lyric as if it were a password to love and happiness. Dining.

Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Through May 18: The remarkably versatile singer-pianist **DIANE SCHUUR**, who is equally at home with forties standards, R. & B. wails, and sultry torch songs. Starting May 20: Legendary lyricist and vocalist **JON HENDRICKS.** Dining.

Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound pastel murals, and, through June, the inimitable **BOBBY SHORT.** On Mondays, **WOODY ALLEN** plays with the **EDDY DAVIS NEW ORLEANS JAZZ BAND.**... ¶ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, **BARBARA CARROLL** is in attendance.

Eighty-Eight's, 228 W. 10th St. (924-0088)—Twenty-three-year-old **DAVID CAMPBELL** (in through May 31) is a charmer who croons the songs of Gershwin, Mercer, and their latter-day acolytes in a high, reedy voice, with a shockingly sub-par piano backup.

Iridium, 44 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—Through May 18: The **NICHOLAS PAYTON** quintet, featuring **DOC CHEATHAM** and **CLARK TERRY.** "Doc Cheatham & Nicholas Payton," the recently released trumpeting get-together, is a genuine lovefest. Each basking in the sunshine of the other's lyricism, the ninety-one-year-old legend and the twenty-three-year-old whiz spend a lazy hour tossing off gorgeously wrought vows of friendship. Don't expect a more heartfelt recording this year; a live encounter promises poetry and sentiment in equal measure. The more garrulous but no less expressive brass veteran Terry takes over from Cheatham on Friday and Saturday. From May 20: That immortal swinging singer **JOE WILLIAMS.** Mondays belong to national treasure **LES PAUL.** Dining.

Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—May 14: **JUINI BOOTH'S JAZZ JAZZ V.P.**, featuring **CHICO FREEMAN** (tenor sax), **JERRY GONZALEZ** (trumpet, conga), and **HILTON RUIZ** (piano). May 15-18: **BAR KOKHBA: JOHN ZORN'S MASADA CHAMBER ENSEMBLE** examines Jewish musical traditions in an improvisatory climate. While klezmer and free jazz aren't often mentioned in the same breath, in Zorn's

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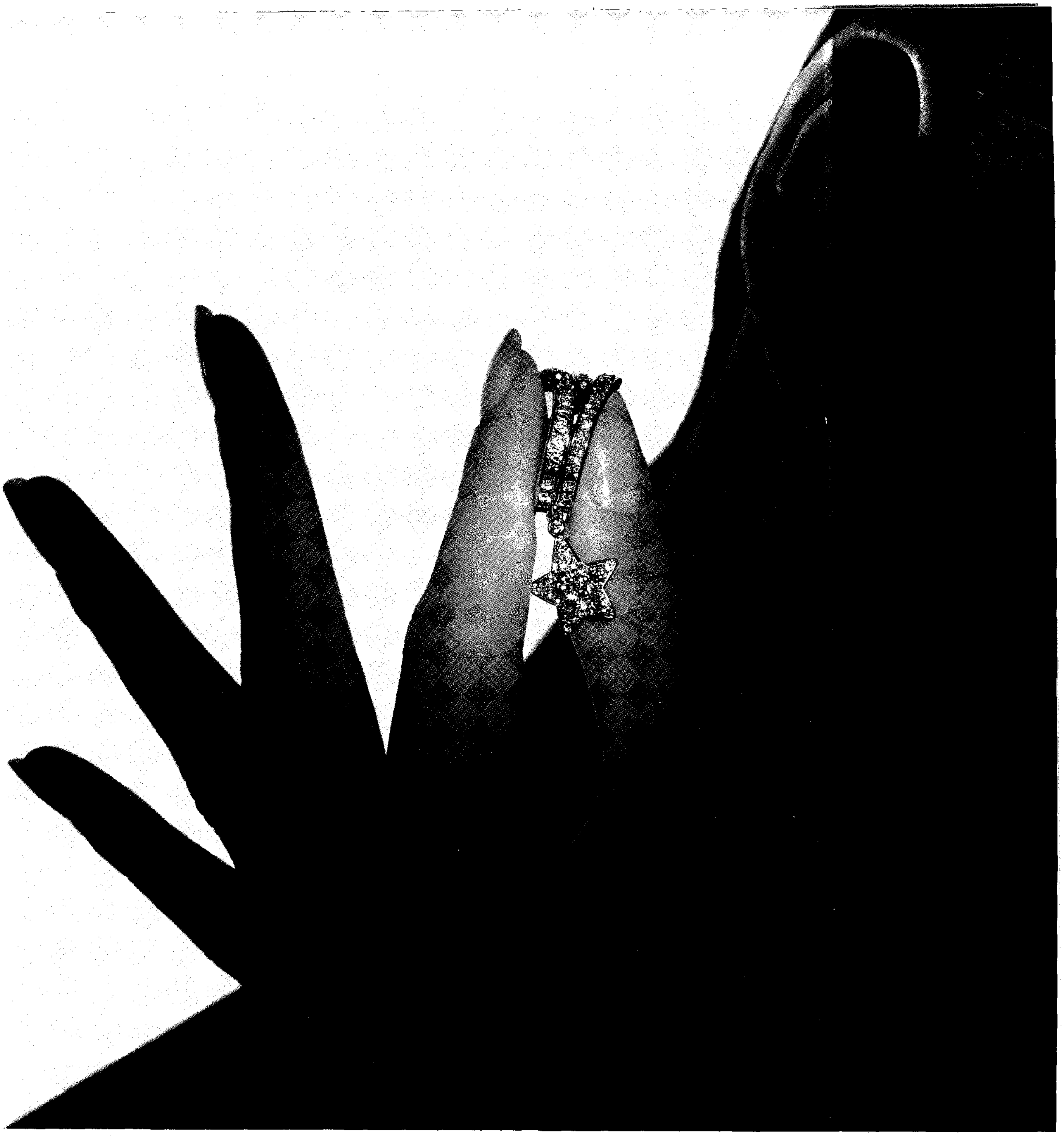

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hands their similarities—wrenching dirges, polyphony, modal melodies both lyrical and feverish—cohere and form a new music.

Lenox Lounge, 288 Lenox Ave., between 124th and 125th Sts. (427-0253)—Making up for lost time, this Harlem club brings first-rate jazz back north with a vengeance. May 16-17: The **JAMES SPAULDING** quartet. Spaulding, a ubiquitous presence on alto saxophone and flute during the sixties, may have smoothed out a few of the edges that made his playing so, well, edgy back then. But he's kept his taste for heated improvisation.

Maxim's, 680 Madison Ave., at 61st St. (751-5111)—A mock-nineteenth-century bistro with stained glass, bevelled mirrors, and inlaid ceilings. Chanteuse **YANNA AVIS,** a Parisian whose repertoire includes songs in French, Spanish, and Italian, is in May 15-17. Dining.

Rainbow & Stars, 30 Rockefeller Plaza (632-5000)—The great cabaret in the sky. **ROSEMARY CLOONEY** is here for a two-week stay with her friend, singer **DOLORES HOPE.**

Sweet Basil, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—Through May 18: The new **KENNY BARRON** quintet. The old quintet, which included saxophonist John Stubblefield and trumpeter Eddie Henderson, was pretty swell, but all good things must come to an end. With a violinist (Regina Carter), a percussionist (Mino Cinelu), a bassist (David Williams), and a cutting-edge alto saxophonist (Greg Osby), the pianist's latest aggregation walks a little closer to the wild side. Starting May 20: The **FRANK FOSTER** quartet. Dining.

Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—The world's most famous jazz club is also the last place in town that still looks and feels like a classic jazz club: subterranean and thick with the spirits of past masters. Through May 18: The **STANLEY TURRENTINE** quintet. You judge a tenor saxophonist like Turrentine not by his virtuosity or his invention but by his sound—in this case, a huge, rounded calling card of sonic warmth and gritty soul. He's recently pledged further allegiance to his jazz roots, and, cleansed of his commercialism, he's making quite a showing. From May 20: **JIMMY HEATH AND THE HEATH BROTHERS.** The **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA** holds sway on Mondays.

Zinno, 126 W. 13th St. (924-5182)—A rarity among jazz clubs: somewhere you'd go to eat even if there were no music. May 14-17: Pianist **JOHN BUNCH** and bassist **STEVE LA SPINA.** Starting May 19: **JOANNE BRACKEEN** (piano) and **CECIL MC BEE** (bass).

ROCK, ETC.

Bottom Line, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—May 17: Sometime Lemonhead **EVAN DANDO** leads a songwriters' roundtable called "**IN THEIR OWN WORDS.**" May 19: Singer-songwriters **TISH HINOJOSA** and **DAVID OLNEY.** May 20: The **FRANCIS DUNNERY** band.

Brownies, 169 Avenue A, at 10th St. (420-8392)—May 16: **DAN ZANES,** formerly of the Del Fuegos, a wafer-thin rock-and-roller who writes dark, dreamy tunes in the manner of Chris Isaak. May 17: **CHAVEZ,** a kind of indie-rock supergroup, featuring former members of Live Skull and Bullet LaVolta. The band is best heard live; its canny, artful intensity provides arena-size bliss.

CBGB & OMFUG, 315 Bowery, at Bleecker St. (982-4052)—May 15: **SLEATER-KINNEY,** the reigning queens of indie-rock hipdom, are a butch trio from Olympia, Washington, who make raw, injured pop out of raucous guitar noise and near-bubblegum hooks. People seem to love it; we've yet to be converted. May 16: **RAILROAD JERK** has a refreshing pre-grunge sound that suggests the Violent Femmes and Camper Van Beethoven with some harmonica and hobo rhymes thrown in. They're smart and funny, and they look like the combos that used to appear in the "Cute Band Alert" section of *Sassy.*

Chicago B.L.U.E.S., 73 Eighth Ave., at 13th St. (924-9755)—May 16-17: Texas guitarist **JOHNNY (CLYDE) COPELAND** (recently recovered from a heart transplant) and his eighteen-year-old daughter, vocalist **SHEMEKIA.**

Coney Island High, 15 St. Marks Pl. (674-7959)—Eighties New Wave poster boys **GENE LOVES JEZEBEL** drop by on May 20.

Irving Plaza, 17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—May 15: **SKELETON KEY'S** front man, Erik Sanko, has worked with such desperadoes as John Lurie, Gavin Friday, and John Waite, but his own raunchy material sounds a bit like Nirvana meets Tom Waits. The band's ripping new record is called "Fantastic Spikes Through Balloon." With **FIREWATER.** May 19: Branford Marsalis's funk collective **BUCKSHOT LEFONQUE.** May 20: **GENE,** the well-groomed English combo, is to the Smiths what the Jam was to the Who. Too bad it doesn't have a songwriter like Paul Weller, but then again, a Morrissey tribute band would be a bit disturbing, wouldn't it? With **STAR 69.**

ONLY CONNECT

Neal's Denver (http://www.charm.net/~brooklyn/Denver/Denver.html)—Most American cities don't have patron saints (most don't deserve them), but Denver may: while the Beat angel Neal Cassady (1926-68) is associated with many places—New York, San Francisco, and most of all the anyplace of "On the Road"—Denver was his home town. The city, sadly, has never embraced him. Cassady, as his sometime lover Allen Ginsberg suggested in "Howl," "waited in vain . . . watched over Denver & brooded & loned in Denver and finally went away to find out the Time. . . ."

This stately black-and-white site redresses that neglect with three virtual tours of the places Cassady walked, talked, worked, and drank, the skid row of Larimer Street, the fleabag hotels he called home. There is history here (sexual exploits, nights of debauch, and even some writing), as well as an honest accounting of Cassady's contributions (it was his style that Kerouac adopted as his own), all with a refreshing lack of hagiography.

The numerous Beat bios tend to gloss over what a problematic character Cassady was. (William Burroughs, no stranger to hustlers, didn't trust him.) Andrew Burnett, the Denver poet and short-story writer who wrote the text for this site, tackles the problem head on: "Money, shoes, pants, knowledge, whatever," Burnett writes, "it's a fair bet that if Cassady approached you on the street near the end of the millennium, he'd charm or con something off you in a heartbeat." Neal's Denver acts as interpreter, tour guide, and, fittingly, promoter, bringing people out for a different kind of ride. "Neal is a colossus risen to Destroy Denver!" Kerouac wrote to Ginsberg. Here, instead, his spirit embraces the city.

Mercury Lounge, 217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—May 14: Hard-hitting garage punk with the **FRIGGS.** May 17-18: **ECHO AND THE BUNNYMEN,** one of the great psychedelic New Wave bands of the eighties, regroups with original vocalist Ian McCulloch and guitarist Will Sergeant. May 19-21: Singer-songwriter **MARK EITZEL** remains one of our finest poets of tenderloin passion and despair. Though his Bay Area band, American Music Club, is no more, his solo gigs share the same unfashionable and eccentric sound. His latest album, "West," is a collaborative project with R.E.M. guitarist **PETER BUCK,** and the great man is slated to be onstage. **TUATARA,** an instrumental act featuring Buck and members of Pearl Jam and Screaming Trees, opens the show, along with **THE MINUS 5,** comprising Buck, Eitzel's organist and bassist **SCOTT MC CAUGHEY,** and **BARRETT MARTIN,** drummer for all three groups.

Supper Club, 240 W. 47th St. (921-1940)—May 14-15: Even before the **LONDON SUEDE** released their first album, four years ago, they were making wildly arrogant claims. The bassist, Mat Osman, described the band as "important, celebratory, huge." The group's eponymous début record didn't quite live up to that description, but between the glam-rock histrionics of lead singer Brett Anderson and the arena-rock charisma of guitarist Bernard Butler, their live shows seemed like the second coming of David Bowie. With the group's second album, "dog man star," Anderson and Butler's songwriting finally caught up with the boasts. But then, in 1994, the singer and the guitarist had a bitter falling-out; Butler left, and the band forged ahead with Richard Oakes, a seventeen-year-old English schoolboy. Having cut his teeth on a world tour, Oakes needed no coddling for his first studio sessions: his work on the group's new disk, "Coming Up," helps to make it their best yet. With **LONGPIGS.**

Tramps, 51 W. 21st St. (727-7788)—May 15: Rip-roaring country rock with **BR5-49.** May 16: The extended, introspective post-punk of Doug Martsch's **BUILT TO SPILL,** with Satisfact and the local **LES SAVY FAV,** fronted by the charismatic Gibb Slife. May 17: **YO LA TENGO.** This literate outfit—the husband-and-wife team of singer Ira Kaplan and drummer Georgia Hubley, with bassist James McNew—has a flair for crisp, three-minute pop songs and long, melancholy experiments. In between, it occasionally dips into blissful folk rock, as on "Fakebook" (1990), its gorgeous collection of (mostly) covers. Concertgoers never really know which band they're in for, although if the fine new disk "I Can Hear the Heart Beating As One" is any indication, there'll be a good dose of each. With **SLEATER-KINNEY** (see CBGB). May 20: **SPEARHEAD,** the postmodern rap collective fronted by Michael Franti, also of Disposable Heroes of Hiphoprisy. With the goofy Fat Albert rap of **CAMP LO.**

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—All that glisters is not gold: "Cartier: 1900-1939," a resplendent exhibition of bijous from the great jewelry workshops of Paris, London, and New York, pretty much reaches the outer limits of glistering. Some of the bibelots, particularly those in exotic styles, are risibly tasteless: a trinket of a Japanese apple blossom, exhibited in a tiny vitrine, is indistinguishable from a tchotchke from Chinatown, except that it's made of ivory, enamel, gold, diamonds, moonstones, pink quartz, and rubellite. Through Aug. 3. . . . ¶ "The Glory of Byzantium" is the museum's most spectacular exhibition in years, a colossal exploration of the art, history, and thought of what is known as the Second Golden Age of Byzantium, an era of unsurpassed imperial opulence which lasted from the mid-ninth century to the thirteenth. Through July 6. . . . ¶ "The Print in the North: The Age of Albrecht Dürer and Lucas van Leyden." Through July 13. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—In an age of digital art, the humble collage can seem deceptively tame. Yet "The Photomontages of Hannah Höch" proves that the artist's imagination needs nothing more than scissors and a pot of glue—and stacks of newspapers and magazines. Through May 20. . . . ¶ "Manuel Alvarez Bravo." The great Mexican photographer's career spans eight decades; this retrospective visits all of them and includes rare platinum prints he made in the sixties from earlier negatives. Through May 18. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, 11 to 6; Thursdays and Fridays, noon to 8:30.)

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—"A Century of Sculpture: The Nasher Collection" features work by Brancusi, Giacometti, Matisse, Smith, and other twentieth-

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century artists. Through June 1. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 10 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 10 to 8.)

Guggenheim Museum SoHo, 575 Broadway, at Prince St. (423-3500)—"Rooms with a View: Environments for Video" includes work by Vito Acconci ("Tele-Furni-System"), Dan Graham ("Three Linked Cubes/Interior Design for Space Showing Videos"), and Angela Bulloch ("Bean Bag Set II"). Through June 15. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Saturday evenings until 8.)

Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—Clearly, the curators of the 1997 Biennial exhibition, Lisa Phillips and Louise Neri, have determined not to make the same mistakes as their predecessors. In contradistinction to the haranguing 1993 show, with its noisy emphasis on identity politics, they have stressed a more poetic (or more palatable?) approach to social issues; the downside is that political engagement of any kind gets lost. This Biennial is, on the whole, hipper and smarter. What the show lacks—and no doubt lacks deliberately—is any sense of clearly articulated argument. Through June 1. (Open Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

Brooklyn Museum of Art, Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—"From Pockets to Pouches: Three Centuries of Handbags." More than forty pieces from the museum's collection demonstrate the evolution of the purse, from Colonial-era gaming bags to the elaborately beaded inventions of Judith Leiber. Through June 22. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5; Saturday evenings until 9.)

Morgan Library, 29 E. 36th St. (685-0008)—"Private Histories: Four Centuries of Journal Keeping" presents the personal records of such diarists as Charlotte Brontë, Victor Hugo's daughter Adèle, Walt Whitman, and Sylvia Plath. Through Aug. 31. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 10:30 to 5; Saturdays, 10:30 to 6; Sundays, noon to 6.)

Museo del Barrio, Fifth Ave. at 104th St. (831-7272)—"Re-aligning Vision: Alternative Currents in South American Drawing" presents examples from forty-six artists from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Venezuela, Uruguay, and Peru. Through Sept. 7. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 5.)

Museum of the City of New York, Fifth Ave. at 104th St. (534-1672)—"A Dream Well Planned: The Empire State Building" chronicles the "world's greatest tower," from the destruction of the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, which formerly occupied the site, through the vertiginous construction of the eighty-six-floor building with its two-hundred-foot mast (intended to function as a mooring for dirigibles), to the 1945 crash of a B-25 bomber into its seventy-ninth floor. . . . ¶ "Of Thee We Sing: George and Ira Gershwin Centennial." Gershwiniana (including evening scarves, money clips, sheet music, and opening-night programs) to commemorate a date about midway between the brothers' respective hundredth birthdays. (Open Wednesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5; Sundays, 1 to 5.)

New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. (869-8089)—"Visionary Daughters of Albion: A Bicentenary Celebration of Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Shelley" revisits the papers, publications, and personal effects of the mother and daughter, authors of "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman" and "Frankenstein," respectively. The pair witnessed—or caused—a startling amount of public and private turbulence (the show includes the suicide note of Percy Shelley's first wife, Harriet Westbrook, who wished her husband the happiness of which she felt deprived) and makes some surprising but logical connections, linking, for instance, the Reign of Terror with Lord Byron's promiscuity. Salomon Room; through Sept. 13. (Open Mondays, and Thursdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6; Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 11 to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, uptown and downtown galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6; Chelsea galleries are generally closed Tuesdays and open Sundays.)

Julio Galán—The Mexican artist's brave, exuberant reinvention of Romanticism extends into a new medium: funky little sculptures made from found ceramic figurines, fractured and reassembled to incorporate tiny, mysterious objects—toy crockery, baubles, miniature magnifying glasses. There are some wonderful paintings, too, all with elements of collage: a self-portrait extravagantly draped with scarlet ribbons, a urinating man with a black plume stuck in his rear. Through May 17. (Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St. 980-5454.)

Fairfield Porter (1907-75)—Paintings from the fifties, sixties, and seventies. They depict a safe, sane exurban paradise, an idyllic world of calm harbors, big dogs, and girls in white dresses—serene Southampton lawnscapes reflecting the static tranquillity of the artist's world, which apparently ended at his backyard fence. Through May 23. (De Nagy, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 262-5050.)

Wayne Thiebaud—Paintings and drawings from the emperor of ice cream. The selection includes examples from his pastry and pie paintings, his vertiginous streetscapes, and a new series of delicious flatland vistas in his signature high-cholesterol palette. Through June 27. (Stone, 113 E. 90th St. 988-6870.)

"Beaux Arts New York"—Photographs, blueprints, and other mementos of such Gilded Age monuments as the Tiffany Building, the Metropolitan Museum, the Savoy Plaza, Delmonico's steak house, and Pennsylvania Station. Through June 27. (PaineWebber, Sixth Ave. at 52nd St. 713-2885.)

Short List—**PAT ADAMS,** Zabriskie, 41 E. 57th St. 752-1223. Through June 14. . . . **CHUCK AGRO,** McGrath, 20 W. 57th St. 956-3366. Through June 7. . . . **RICHARD ARTSCHWAGER,** Boone, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 752-2929. Through June 28. . . . **OSCAR BLUEMENER,** Mathes, 41 E. 57th St. 752-5135. Through June 6. . . . **FRANCESCO CLEMENTE,** Gagosian, 980 Madison Ave., at 76th St. 744-2313. Through June 14. . . . **RICHARD ESTES,** Marlborough, 40 W. 57th St. 541-4900. Open Mondays; through June 7. . . . **SAM FRANCIS,** Emmerich, 41 E. 57th St. 752-0124.

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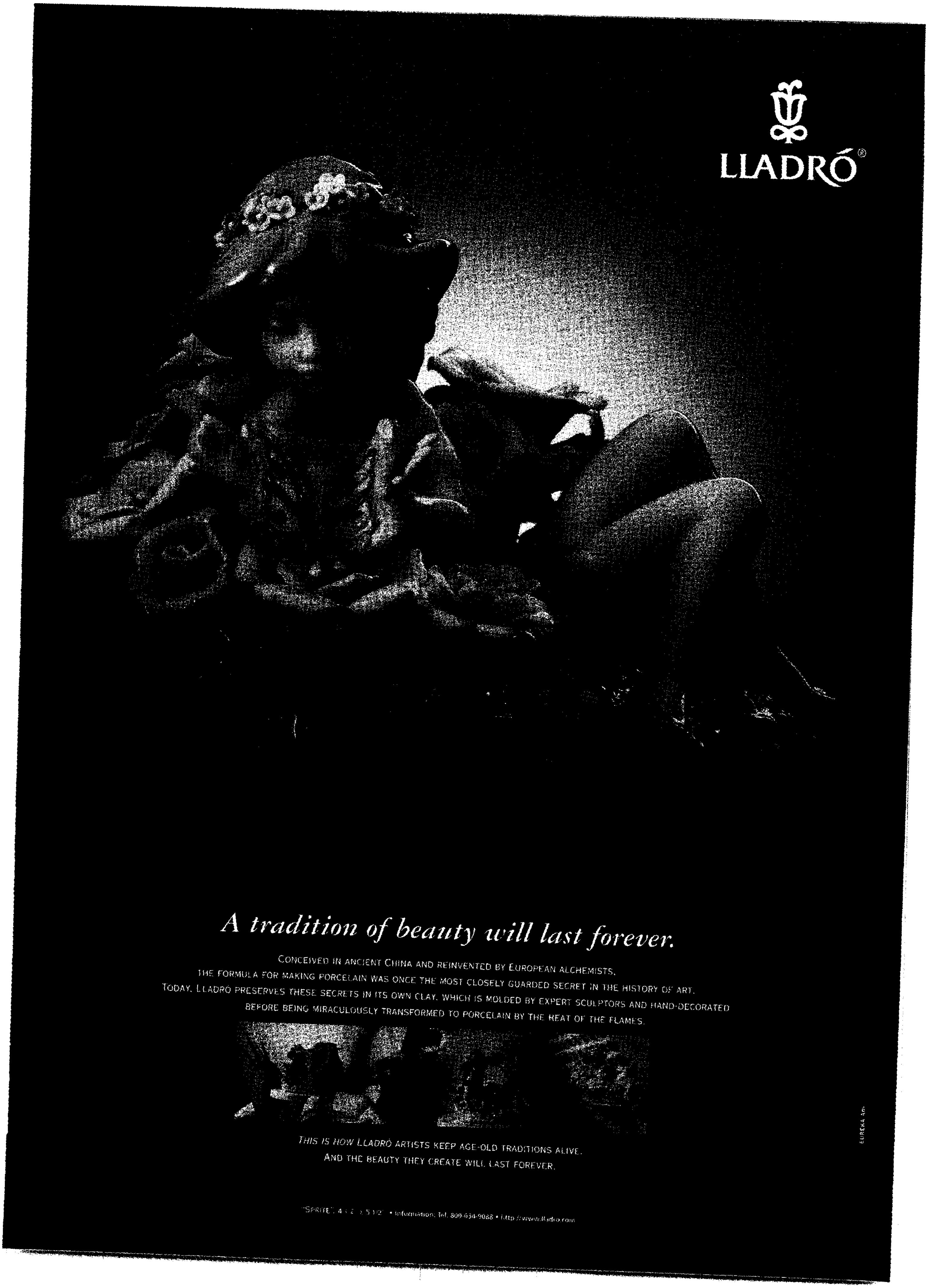

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EUREKA

Through May 24. . . . **ALFRED JENSEN** and **TONY SMITH**, Pace Wildenstein, 32 E. 57th St. 421-3292. Both shows through June 20. . . . **IDA KOHLMEYER**, Ryan, 24 W. 57th St. 397-0766. Through June 14. . . . **BARRY LE VA**, Danese, 41 E. 57th St. 223-2227. Through May 24. . . . **HENRI MATISSE**, Hirschl & Adler Modern, 21 E. 70th St. 535-8810. Through June 20. . . . **PETER POSKAS**, Schmidt Bingham, 41 E. 57th St. 888-1122. Through May 30. . . . **GEORGE SEGAL**, Janis, 110 W. 57th St. 586-0110. Through June 6. . . . **JOHN SLOAN**, Kraushaar, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 307-5730. Through June 6. . . . **BILLY SULLIVAN**, Fischbach, 24 W. 57th St. 759-2345. Through May 17.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

Stephan Balkenhol—Wood sculptures, reliefs, and paintings on board, with emphasis on the human figure. There is something medieval, even atavistic, and particularly Teutonic about carved wood; Balkenhol, a German artist, exploits these resonances even as the rough, deliberately crude modelling of his figures recalls Expressionism. Through May 31. (Gladstone, 515 W. 24th St. 206-9300.)

Gary Hume—Enamel paintings that alternately evoke the swinging London of the sixties and American Pop of the same period, rendered with a cool *fin de millénaire* sensibility. They are really more a glossy glorification of the painted surface than an exercise in figuration. "Angel" could be a late Warhol portrait reimagined in subtle, high-art colors; in "Cerith," another portrait (this one on aluminum), Twiggy eyes are the only inflection on the face's shiny contour, which is crowned with a glorious patch of cerulean. There are undertones of horror, too: in "Francis," the face has been reduced to a puddle of mud, with eyes and lips picked out, à la Warhol's "Marilyn." A puzzling yet bland suite of Cibachromes of a snowman, stained first blue, then red, then black, hangs in the rear gallery. Through June 27. (Marks, 522 W. 22nd St. 243-0200.)

James Hyde—Hot, vivid variations on Abstract Expressionism, in materials ranging from axle grease to chocolate to (of all things) paint. "Fix," a massive (ten by fifteen feet) wall piece in vinyl and bright tape, vibrates with electric plasticity. A series of axle-grease smears in glass boxes, "Grip," "Grind," and "Graft," are sweetly mysterious gestures from a ghostly parallel universe. In "Sweep," blobby, Hofmannesque rectangles in pale, tasteful hues have been slapped onto a pink carpet laid out like a corpse on a steel slab. For the collector on a budget, there's also a fun little multiple of concrete bricks coated with chocolate. Through May 24. (Baldacci, 521 W. 21st St. 463-0919.)

Kate Javens—Spare, elegant oils of birds, fishes, and hands. Although they verge on the precious, they possess a certain folksy gravitas, particularly in the larger formats; the tiny paintings of crows are so haiku-like that they threaten to evanesce before your eyes. The artist's attempt to link her work to American social history is self-conscious and almost clumsy (the crow seems to be an evocation of an early labor reformer's free spirit), but she has nonetheless found something firm and gritty to anchor her work to. Through May 25. (Morthland, 225 Tenth Ave., at 23rd St. 242-7767.)

Tony Smith (1912-80)—Two sculptures and related works on paper. The showpiece here is "Moondog" (1964), a tower of octahedral columns rising some seventeen feet—one of the most impressive works of sculpture exhibited in New York recently. Through June 7. (Cooper, 534 W. 21st St. 255-1105. Open Tuesdays, closed Sundays.)

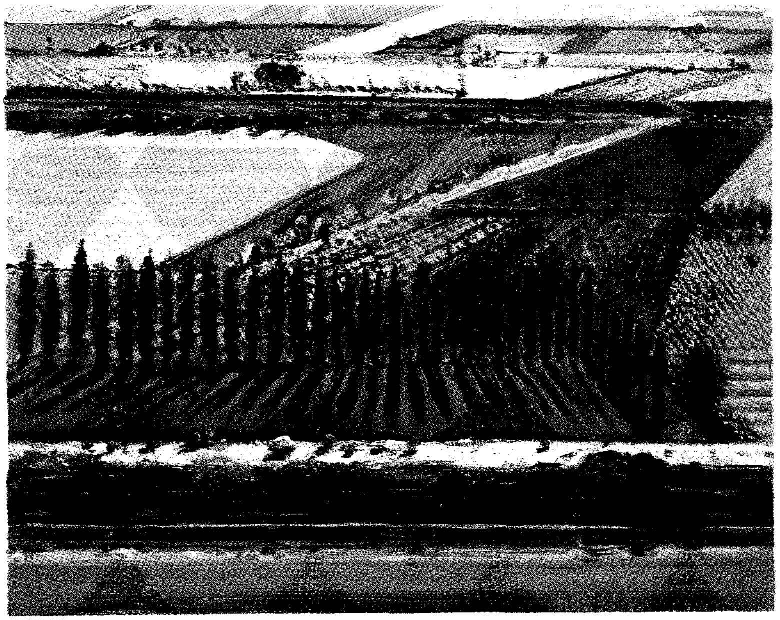
Juan Uslé—"Luz Aislada" ("Isolated Light"), a suite of photographs and related abstract paintings by the Spanish artist. Lattices and squiggles are the primary components of the paintings, and they are recapitulated in the photographs (with, for instance, a bit of electrical cord or the curve of a woman's back). Through May 31. (Cheim & Read, 521 W. 23rd St. 242-7727. Open Tuesdays, closed Sundays.)

Short List—**SHONAGH ADELMAN**, Kirkland, 504 W. 22nd St. 627-3930. Through May 31. . . . **TONY FEHER**, D'Amelio Terras, 525 W. 22nd St. 352-9460. Through June 21. . . . **MAUREEN GALLACE**, 303 Gallery, 525 W. 22nd St. 255-1121. Through June 14. . . . **BRICE MARDEN**, Marks, 523 W. 24th St. 243-0020. Through June 27. . . . **MARILYN MINTER**, XL, 504 W. 22nd St. 462-4111. Through June 8. . . . **KELLIE O'BOSKY**, Fredericks, 504 W. 22nd St. 633-6555. Open Tuesdays, closed Sundays; through May 31. . . . **JIM SHAW** and **GARY SIMMONS**, Metro Pictures, 519 W. 24th St. 206-7100. Both shows through June 7.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

Joseph Kosuth—"L'Essence de la Rhétorique Est dans l'Allégorie," an installation by the seminal Conceptualist based on his project for a recent Magritte retrospective. This variation on that project consists of three original Magritte paintings that feature texts; on the opposite wall, Kosuth has placed three framed extracts from Michel Foucault's influential study of the painter. The installation is typically elegant and theatrical, but its point remains obscure. Through May 17. (Sean Kelly, 43 Mercer St. 343-2405.)

Sean Landers—Paragon of the "loser" trend in contemporary art, Landers is best known for lengthy, hilarious text paintings and excruciatingly self-revelatory videos. Now, perhaps weary of self-exposure, he has turned to more conventional paintings, which nevertheless stay close to the narcissistic woundedness of his previous work. They are large and cartoonish, and their subject matter is pure Landers: a picnic scene featuring a leering robot and a strangely buxom rabbit, a group of aliens lost at sea. Through May 31. (Rosen, 130 Prince St. 941-0203.)



"Cypress Farms," by Wayne Thiebaud (Stone).

Elizabeth Murray—Eight recent paintings by an artist known for her clever hybridization of abstract and representational forms. While the relief surfaces of her shaped canvases seem to have become shallower, the formal vigor that animates their incongruous elements remains vivid. Looking over these paintings, you can't help remarking the breadth of her influence on younger artists mining the tradition of biomorphic abstraction. Through June 20. (Pace Wildenstein, 142 Greene St. 431-9224.)

"Celluloid Cave"—Films by visual artists, including Dara Friedman, Martin Kersels, and Marijke van Warmerdam. Through June 7. (Thread Waxing Space, 476 Broadway. 966-9520.)

"Rajasthani Miniatures"—Watercolors from the fifteenth century through the nineteenth, depicting idealized scenes from the lives of the princely castes of northwestern India. Through June 7. (The Drawing Center, 35 Wooster St. 219-2166. Open Wednesday evenings until 8.)

Short List—**MARK DI SUVERO**, Gagosian, 136 Wooster St. 228-2828. Through June 14. . . . **GILBERT AND GEORGE**, Lehmann Maupin, 39 Greene St., 965-0753; and Sonnabend, 420 West Broadway, 966-6160. Both shows through June 28. . . . **PERRY HOBERMAN**, Postmasters, 80 Greene St. 941-5711. Through May 24. . . . **DONALD JUDD**, Brooke Alexander, 59 Wooster St. 925-4338. Through May 31. . . . **KATHARINE KUHARIC**, P.P.O.W, 532 Broadway. 941-8642. Through May 24. . . . **JUNE LEAF**, Thorp, 103 Prince St. 431-6880. Through May 17. . . . **FERNANDO LEAL AUDIRAC**, M-13, at 72 Greene St. 925-3007. Through May 31. . . . **ROBIN LOWE**, Bonakdar, 130 Prince St. 925-8035. Through May 31. . . . **JOHN MC CRACKEN**, Zwirner, 43 Greene St. 966-9074. Through June 21. . . . **EDWIN SCHLOSSBERG**, Feldman, 31 Mercer St. 226-3232. Through May 31. . . . **MIMI SMITH**, Kustera, 41 Wooster St. 965-1527. Through May 24. . . . **NEDKO SOLAKOV**, Deitch Projects, 76 Grand St. 343-7300. Through June 7. . . . **MARK TANSEY**, Marcus, 578 Broadway. 226-3200. Through May 31.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

Sotheby's—May 14: The second half of a sale of major Impressionist, Post-Impressionist, and modern paintings, works on paper, and sculpture. . . . ¶ May 15-17: Auctions of prints. . . . ¶ May 16-17: Rare and collectible wines, offered in conjunction with Sherry-Lehmann, including two bottles of Madeira from the cellar of Thomas Jefferson. . . . ¶ May 19: Rare books. . . . ¶ May 19-21: Property from the estate of Pamela Harriman. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 606-7000.)

Christie's—May 14: Contemporary prints and other multiples. . . . ¶ May 14-15: Impressionist, Post-Impressionist, and modern works by leading lights (Pisarro, Gauguin, Picasso, and so on.) . . . ¶ May 20: Old Masters. (Park Ave. at 59th St. 546-1000.)

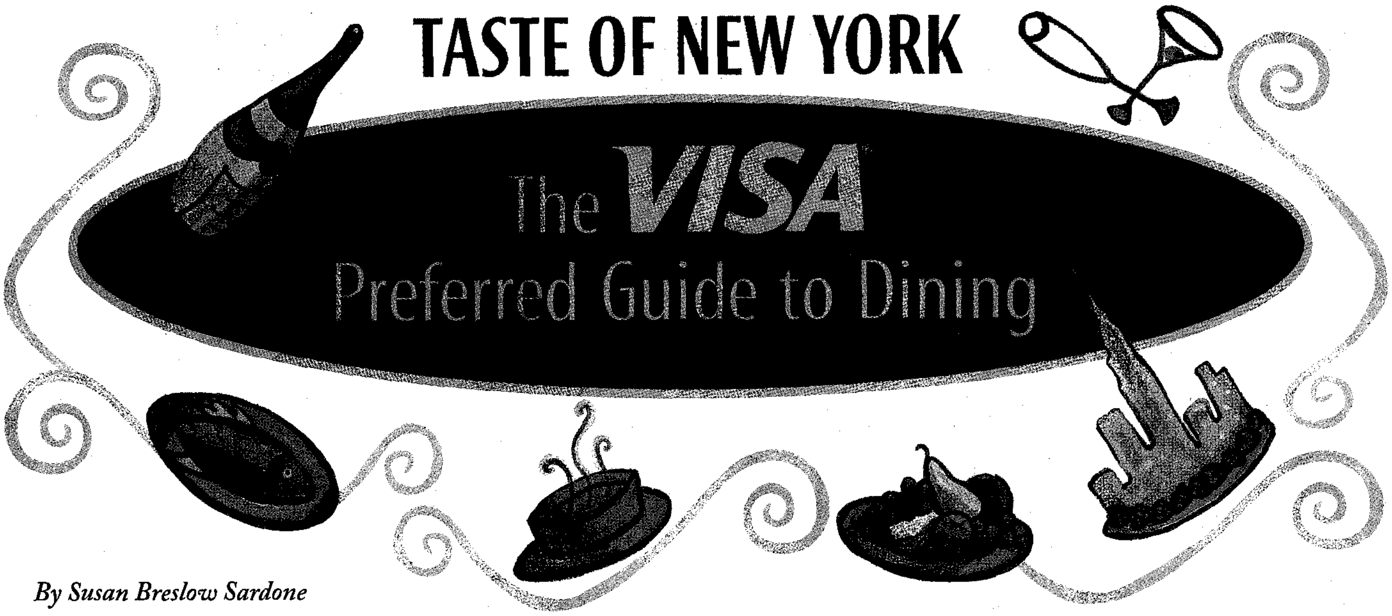
Swann—An auction of nineteenth-century and miniature books. (104 E. 25th St. 254-4710. May 15.)

Morrell's—A wine auction, particularly strong in notable Bordeaux. (Union League Club, 38 E. 36th St. May 17. For information, call 307-4200.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

Inez van Lamsweerde—"The Widow," an installation of photographs suggesting a stylishly sinister narrative. Van Lamsweerde works on the borderline between art and fashion, and the slickness of her surfaces belies the insidiousness of her message. The rear gallery contains a selection of her previous pieces, advertisement

TASTE OF NEW YORK



The VISA Preferred Guide to Dining

By Susan Breslow Sardone

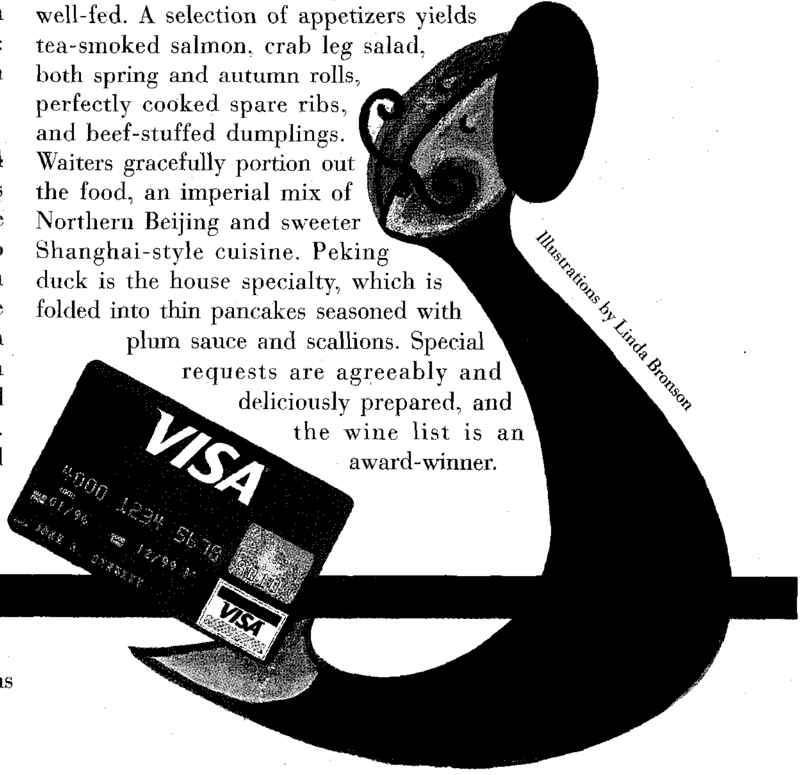
Where will you go for dinner, when the choices are so plentiful? How about a place that helps Citymeals-on-Wheels feed the homebound elderly? Thanks to Visa and this restaurant program exclusive to *The New Yorker*, every time you charge a meal using your Visa® card at any of the participating restaurants in this and all other "Taste of New York" features, you'll also contribute to the not-for-profit organization.* The following restaurants are among many involved in this effort.

IL CANTINORI • 32 East 10th Street • 212-673-6044 On a tree-lined street in Greenwich Village, cozy Il Cantinori resembles a Tuscan farmhouse inside: stucco walls, terra cotta floors, and flowers everywhere. Executive chef Frank Minieri serves simple and robust fare. Begin with an order of bruschetta or grilled calamari with chopped tomatoes. Pasta specialties include creamy pappardelle with pesto and beans, and ravioli with bresaola and lemon cream. Roast loin of pork, pheasant alla fiorentina, and seared scallops in lemony white wine and butter sauce are among the main courses. For an uncommon taste, try a cuttlefish dish: Enjoy the imported mollusk either in risotto or as an accompaniment to ricotta and spinach-filled ravioli.

LE PÉRIGORD •405 East 52nd Street •212-755-6244 Sutton Place stylish, Le Périgord takes its food—and its manners—seriously. Jackets and ties are required inside the formal, peach-colored room. But the elegant crowd seems to appreciate the civility as well as the warmth of Swiss-born owner Georges Briguet, who greets patrons at the door. The restaurant serves a prix-fixe traditional French menu with an extra charge for specialty items such as beluga or sevruga caviar. Entrées include rack of lamb, sautéed calf liver, and a roasted chicken breast with madeira and truffle juice. Those who can resist ordering a dessert soufflé may find their resolve dwindle as the pastry cart approaches.

TONY MAY'S SAN DOMENICO •240 Central Park South • 212-265-5959 Two women under thirty have given elegant San Domenico a fresh attitude. One is Marisa May, daughter of the owner, whose warm smile greets guests. The other is chef Odette Fada, who prepares alta cucina, the refined food of the Italian aristocracy. While the menu retains signature offerings, Fada has added new items based on season-fresh ingredients, like her springtime dandelion salad. Among the daily handmade pastas are garganelli (quills) with caviar and chives and hearty spaghetti alla chitarra. But it is the desserts that are truly spectacular: "Il Piano" is a miniature baby grand, sculpted of chocolate ganache with a dark and white chocolate keyboard. Encore!

TSE YANG •34 East 51st Street •212-688-5447 Perhaps the prettiest and most luxurious Chinese restaurant in New York, with gold-brocade wall covering and banquette seating, Tse Yang is a midtown refuge where even the fish in their oversize aquariums appear serene and well-fed. A selection of appetizers yields tea-smoked salmon, crab leg salad, both spring and autumn rolls, perfectly cooked spare ribs, and beef-stuffed dumplings. Waiters gracefully portion out the food, an imperial mix of Northern Beijing and sweeter Shanghai-style cuisine. Peking duck is the house specialty, which is folded into thin pancakes seasoned with plum sauce and scallions. Special requests are agreeably and deliciously prepared, and the wine list is an award-winner.



Illustrations by Linda Bronson

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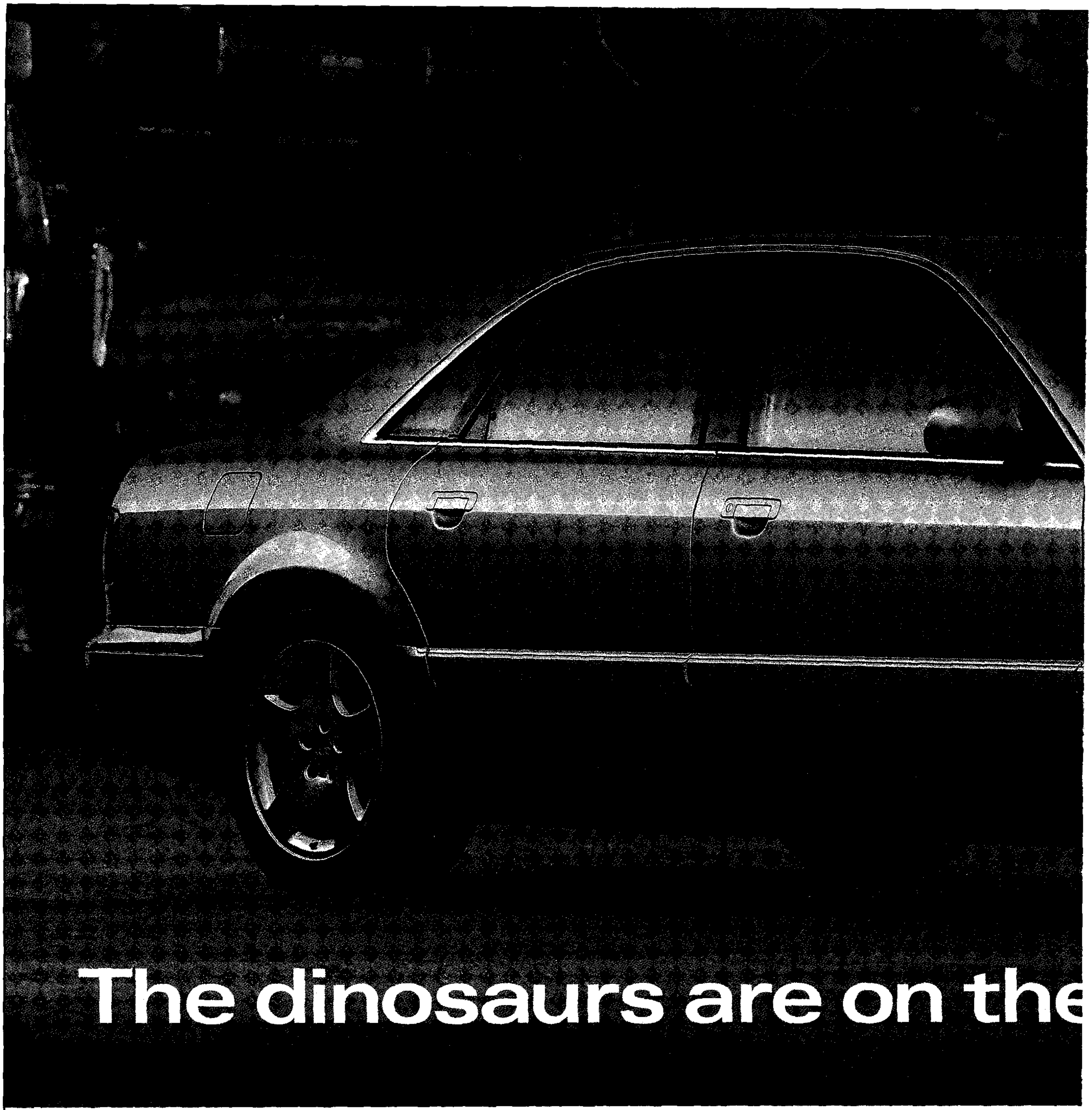

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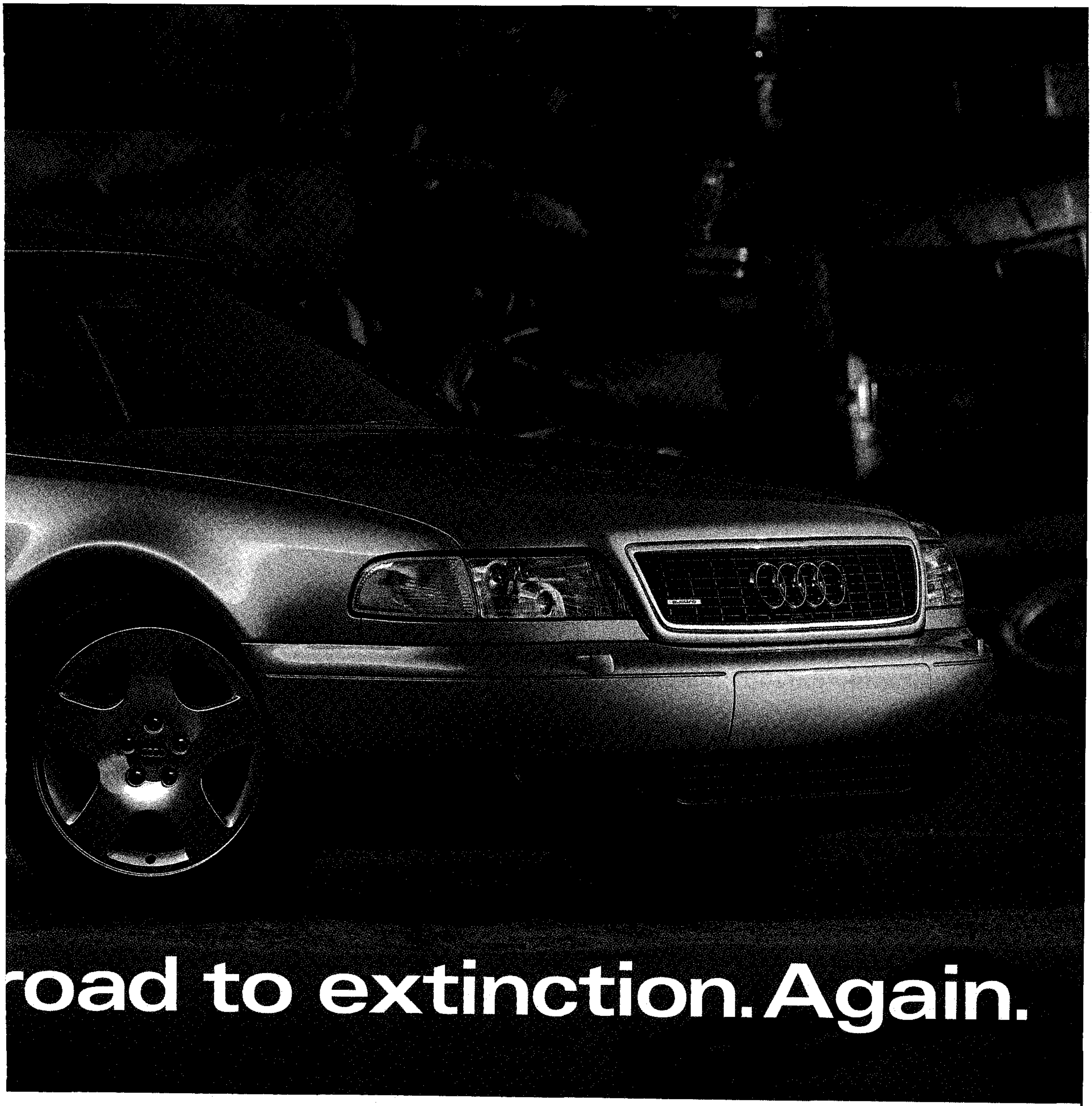

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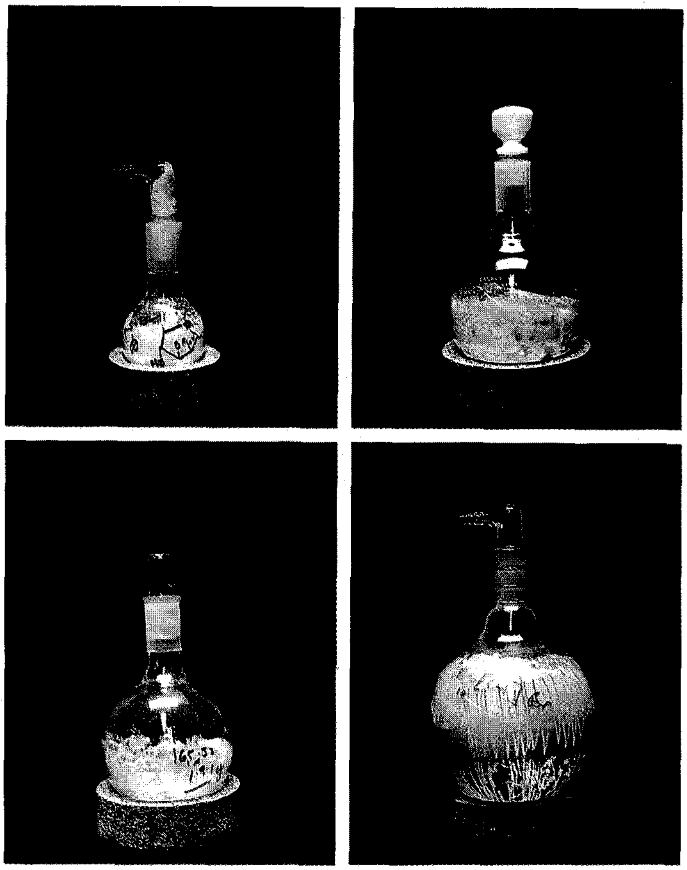


A detail from "Sequential Molecules," by Catherine Wagner, at the International Center of Photography.

which feature subtle computer manipulations of photographic images. Through May 17. (Marks, 523 W. 24th St. 243-0200. Open Tuesdays, closed Sundays.)

Helen Levitt / Édouard Baldus (1813-89)—Forty vintage New York prints from 1936 to 1945. (See also I.C.P. Midtown.) / Twenty architectural photographs of Paris, by one of the early masters. Both shows through May 31. (Laurence Miller, 138 Spring St. 226-1220.)

"Coming of Age"—A benefit show of photographs by artists who have published in the journal *Blind Spot*, including William Eggleston, David LaChapelle, Lois Conner, Nobuyoshi Araki, Dorte Eissfeldt, and Mitch Epstein. Through May 29. (White Columns, 154 Christopher St. 924-4212. Open Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 6.)

"Glorious Gardens"—Inflorescent imagery from throughout the present century, by such artists as Atget, Sudek, Blossfeldt, Porter, and Meyerowitz. Through June 28. (Benrubi, 52 E. 76th St. 517-3766.)

International Center of Photography, 1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St. (860-1777)—"Art & Science: Investigating Matter," a series of laboratory photographs by Catherine Wagner. Through June 15. (Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

International Center of Photography Midtown, Sixth Ave. at 43rd St. (860-1777)—"Helen Levitt: Crosstown," a retrospective of the premier New York street photographer's career. . . . ¶ "Fast Forward: Growing Up in the Shadow of Hollywood," Lauren Greenfield's recent series on Los Angeles youth. Both shows through Sept. 7. (Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

Short List—**nancy buirski,** Schickler, 52 E. 76th St. 737-6647. Open Mondays; through May 24. . . . **nancy burson,** Ricco/Maresca, 152 Wooster St. 780-0071. Through May 17. . . . **clifford ross,** Houk Friedman, 851 Madison Ave., at 70th St. 628-5300. Through June 14. . . . **pierre verger,** Witkin, 415 West Broadway. 925-5510. Through June 28.

(See the museum listings for a photography exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC

(The box-office number for Alice Tully Hall is 875-5050; for Carnegie Hall and Weill Recital Hall, 247-7800; and for Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St., 501-3330.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

New York Philharmonic—At Avery Fisher Hall, Leonard Slatkin conducting. May 15-17 and May 20, all at 8: Dvořák's "Carnival Overture," Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 2 (with Eldar Nebolsin), and Copland's Third Symphony. . . . ¶ May 17 at 2: A Casual Saturdays concert comprising Janáček's String Quartet No. 2 ("Intimate Letters") and Copland's Third Symphony. (875-5030.)

American Symphony Orchestra—Leon Botstein, who has conducted this orchestra since 1992, has a knack for juxtaposing works in ways that make listeners hear even the ultra-familiar afresh. This concert turns the spotlight on the mutual admiration of Brahms and Dvořák, teaming up two roughly coeval D-Major symphonies, Brahms's idyllic Second, dating from the summer he spent in Carinthia in 1877, and Dvořák's sunny Sixth, from just three years later, which very much mirrors the sound-world of the Brahms. (Avery Fisher Hall. 875-5030. May 14 at 8.)

New York Scandia Symphony—The orchestra, which specializes in Scandinavian music, performs Nielsen's "Aladdin" Suite and Flute Concerto (with Lisa Hansen), as well as Harald Saeverud's "Galdreslatten." Dorrit Matson conducts. (Trinity Church, Broadway at Wall St. May 15 at 1. Admission by contribution.)

Riverside Symphony—George Rothman conducts Schumann's Symphony No. 2, Schubert's Six German Dances (as arranged by Webern), and Schoenberg's Piano Concerto (featuring John Root). (Alice Tully Hall. May 15 at 8.)

Orchestra of the S.E.M. Ensemble—Petr Kotik leads the avant-garde ensemble in premières of pieces by Maria de Alvear, Pauline Oliveros, Alvin Lucier, and Mr. Kotik. (Merkin Concert Hall. May 15 at 8.)

Collegiate Chorale—Brahms's "A German Requiem," directed by Robert Bass. (Marble Collegiate Church, Fifth Ave. at 29th St. May 16 at 8. Tickets at the door.)

Dessoff Choirs—Kent Tritle directs a program that includes Arvo Pärt's "Miserere" and Bernstein's "Chichester Psalms." (St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. May 16 at 8. For information about tickets, call 935-2551.)

I Cantori di New York—The chamber choir offers works by Granville Bantock, Poulenc, and Brahms, among others. (Calvary Episcopal Church, Park Ave. S. at 21st St. May 17 at 8. For information about tickets, call 439-4758.)

Orpheus Chamber Orchestra—Richard Goode joins the ensemble for Mozart's E-Flat-Major Piano Concerto (K. 449), in a concert that also includes Respighi's "Ancient Airs and Dances (Suite No. 1)" and Kodály's "Dances of Galanta." (Riverside Church, Riverside Dr. at 120th St. May 18 at 3. For information about tickets, call 678-1704.)

Trinity Choir and Orchestra—Owen Burdick directs Haydn's "The Creation." (Trinity Church, Broadway at Wall St. 602-0873. May 18 at 3.)

RECITALS

Alban Berg String Quartet—The Viennese foursome performs Schubert's Quartets No. 12 (the "Quartettsatz"), No. 13 ("Rosamunde"), and No. 15. (Carnegie Hall. May 14 at 8.)

David Oei—The pianist is featured in chamber performances of Mozart's Piano Concertos in F Major (K. 413) and E-Flat Major (K. 449). (CAMI Hall, 165 W. 57th St. May 14 at 8. No tickets necessary.)

David Eggar—The cellist and colleagues present an evening of premières that involve not only music but also dance and storytelling. (Merkin Concert Hall. May 14 at 8.)

St. Luke's Chamber Ensemble—The instrumentalists offer an all-Bach program, comprising the A-Minor Violin Concerto and the "Brandenburg" Concertos No. 4 and No. 5. (Temple Emanu-El, Fifth Ave. at 65th St. May 15 at 6:30. No tickets necessary.)

Bargemusic—Pianist William Wolfram performs Chopin's G-Minor Ballade; violinist Laura Park and cellist Jesse Levy join him for trios by Beethoven (in E-Flat Major, Op. 1, No. 1) and Schumann (in D Minor). (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-4061. May 15 at 7:30 and May 18 at 4.)

Robert Glasgow—Organist, performing Widor's Seventh Symphony, in addition to works by Franck and Sowerby, on a newly installed five-manual instrument by Robert Turner. (Church of the Holy Family, 315 E. 47th St. May 16 at 7:30. Tickets at the door.)

Anonymous 4—The four women singers, specialists in the work of much earlier times, perform the music of a solemn vespers service for the Feast of the Assumption—chant, organum, motets, and conductus—as it might have sounded at the Cathedral of Notre-Dame de Paris in about 1210, just when the systematized notation of polyphony was beginning to point the way to the future of Western music. (St. Michael's Church, Amsterdam Ave. at 99th St. 678-5432. May 16 at 8.)

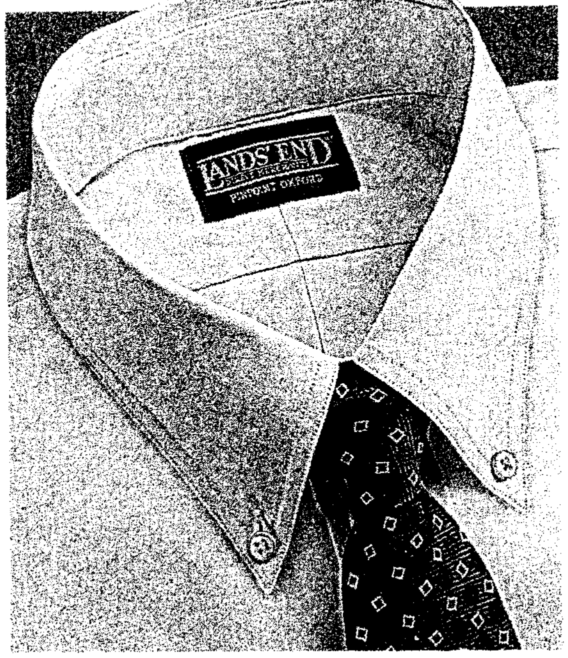
American Festival of Microtonal Music—This year's investigation of itty-bitty intervals opens with nothing (John Cage's "0′ 0″") and proceeds with compositions by Wendy Carlos, Edgar David Grana, Ganesh Anandan, Rainer Wiens, Elodie Lauten, Jon Catler, Frank Wigglesworth, and Joseph Gabriel Maneri. (New York University Theatre, 35 W. 4th St. May 16 at 8. For information about tickets, call 517-3550. The festival continues through May 23.)

Sundays on the Island—The weekly chamber-music series on City Island, the ever-surprising maritime community, celebrates its fourth anniversary this week, with three works by Bach: his "Wedding" Cantata, No. 202 ("Weichet nur," with soprano Hila Plitman), his Cantata No. 84 ("Ich bin vergnügt"), and one of his violin sonatas (featuring Nurit Pacht). (Le Refuge Inn, 620 City Island Ave., City Island, the Bronx. 718-885-2478. May 18 at noon.)

Bang on a Can Marathon—Eight hours on the cutting edge, with works by twenty-eight

COURTESY FRAENKEL GALLERY, SAN FRANCISCO

Why some of the biggest manufacturers refuse to make shirts for us.



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From the fit and the fabric, to the stitching of the buttonholes.

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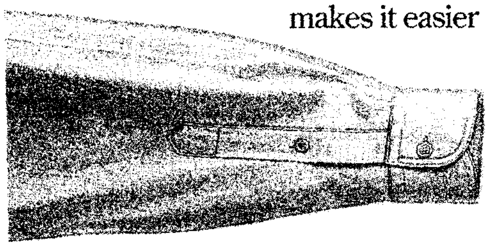
A classic fit. Some companies go overboard; they cut off-the-shoulder, with big, blousey armholes. When you put a jacket on, the fabric bunches up.

Our shoulders are a *little* more relaxed than years gone by. But the cut is still traditional.

So there's no bunching up – and you look better.

A longer sleeve placket. Tip to cuff, ours is 6 ¾" – an inch (or more) longer than others. This makes it easier to lay out the sleeve for ironing, adds to your comfort. Note the extra button: an Old World touch.



Longer shirttails, which stay tucked in. Some shirtmakers abbreviate their tails to save on fabric. Ours are longer by 1" or more.

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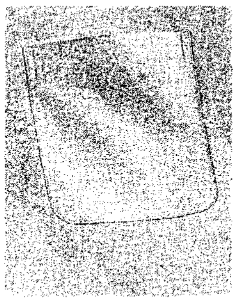

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Grommets behind collar buttons. Soft pads inside the shirt to keep the buttons from ripping through. Most manufacturers omit grommets – buttons must fend for themselves.

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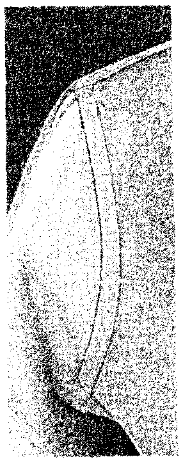

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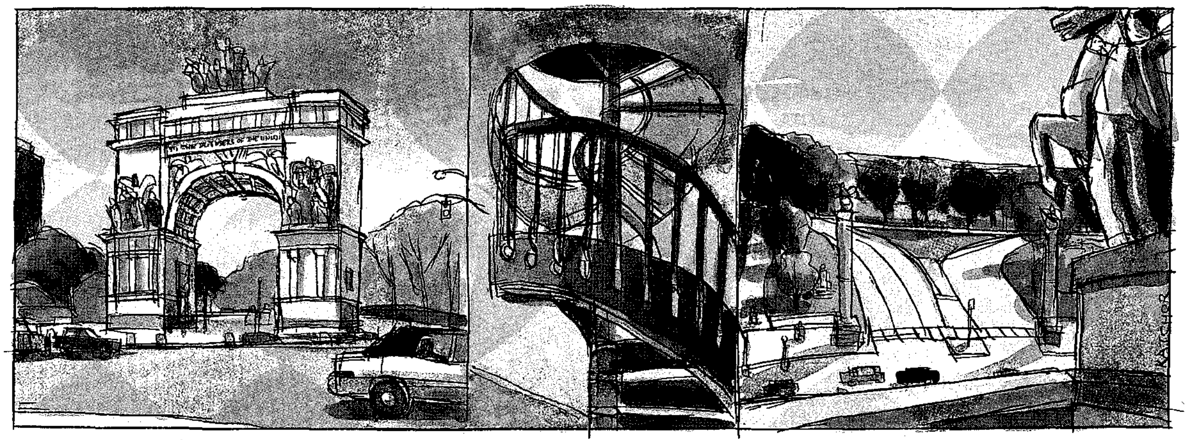


BROOKLYN'S ÉTOILE: *The hundred-and-five-year-old Soldiers' and Sailors' Memorial Arch in Grand Army Plaza, at Flatbush Avenue and Eastern Parkway, will be open for free tours on May 17 and 18, from 1 to 5.*

composers. (Alice Tully Hall. May 18, from 2:30 until 10:30.)

Nicolas Pien—The organist of the Church of St. Godard in Rouen plays works by Franck, Guillou, Messiaen, and others. (Church of St. Ignatius Loyola, Park Ave. at 84th St. May 18 at 4. Tickets at the door.)

David Korevaar—The pianist performs Beethoven's "Diabelli" Variations. (Hotel Wales, Madison Ave. at 92nd St. May 18 at 6 and 8. No tickets necessary.)

A Flight of Flutes—Carol Wincenc, Linda Chesis, and Laura Gilbert team up with fifteen young flutists in a benefit concert of music by Mozart, Boismortier, Peter Schickele, and others. (St. Paul's Chapel, Columbia University; enter at Broadway and 116th St. May 19 at 7:30. For information about tickets, call 865-1294.)

Helicon Ensemble—*Harmonie* was the generic term for the wind ensembles that entertained with background music in late-eighteenth-century Austria and Germany, sometimes performing original works, but more often playing transcriptions of popular operatic selections. Preparing such transcriptions could be lucrative work, and, without the benefit of copyright, composers had to prepare a wind arrangement quickly if they didn't want some hack to publish one first. (Thus an already overburdened Mozart, writing to his father in 1782, following the première of "Die Entführung aus dem Serail": "I have a big piece of work ahead as must arrange my opera for *Harmonie* by a week from Sunday; otherwise, someone else will beat me to it and take my profit.") In this concert, the period-instrument players offer an original *Harmonie* conception by Mozart (the transcendent B-Flat-Major Serenade, or "Gran Partita," K. 361), in addition to Joseph Triebensee's transcription of movements from "Don Giovanni." (Weill Recital Hall. May 19 at 8.)

Mordecai Shehori—Performing an especially well-plotted program of piano music by Schubert (including the B-Flat-Major Sonata, D. 960), Liszt (a keyboard version of the "Gretchen" movement from "A Faust Symphony," among other pieces), and Schubert/Liszt (the "Gretchen am Spinnrade" and "Ständchen von Shakespeare" transcriptions). (Merkin Concert Hall. May 19 at 8.)

Composers Concordance—Presenting contemporary works in a variety of styles, from Berio's "Sequenza 9b" for alto saxophone to Frank Oteri's "Two Transfers" for tenor and string quartet. (New York University Theatre, 35 W. 4th St. May 19 at 8. Tickets at the door.)

Ayako Yoshida—The violinist, assisted by pianist Ilan Rechtman, offers Beethoven's "Spring" Sonata, as well as showpieces by Sarasate. (Mansfield Hotel, 12 W. 44th St. May 19 at 8. No tickets necessary.)

ALSO OF INTEREST

LITTLE ORCHESTRA SOCIETY: An all-Vivaldi concert. (Alice Tully Hall. May 14 at 7:30.) . . . **RICHARD GLAZIER:** Pianist. (Weill Recital Hall. May 14 at 8.) . . . **CERDDORIAN VOCAL ENSEMBLE:** Choral works by ten New York composers. (St. Luke In-the-Fields, 487 Hudson St., at Grove St. May 14 at 8. Tickets at the door.) . . . **AMERICAN OPERA PROJECTS:** The première of David Rodwin's "Ecstatic Journey." (463 Broome St. 431-8102. May 15-17 at 8.) . . . **MANHATTAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC SYMPHONY:** Julius Rudel conducts music by Ginastera, Dvořák, and Ibert. (Borden Auditorium, Manhattan School of Music, Broadway at 122nd St. May 16 at 8. No tickets necessary.) . . . **GREENWICH VILLAGE SINGERS:** Performing Rossini's "Petite Messe Solennelle." (St. Joseph's Church, 371 Sixth Ave., at Washington Pl. May 16 at 8. For information about tickets, call 642-8176.) . . . **NEW AMSTERDAM SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA:** Music by Bizet, Ravel, and Brahms (his Piano Concerto No. 2, with David Buechner). (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. May 16 at 8. Tickets at the door.) . . . **SUSAN BOTTI:** Soprano and composer, joined by colleagues in performances of her music. (Ethical Culture Society, 2 W. 64th St. May 16-17 at 8. Tickets at the door.) . . . **AMATO OPERA COMPANY:** Opening performances of "The Merry Widow," in English. (Amato Opera Theatre, 319 Bowery, at 2nd St. 228-8200. May 17 at 7:30 and May 18 at 2:30.) . . . **ENSEMBLE FOR THE SEICENTO:** Early Baroque Italian music. (Church for All Nations, 417 W. 57th St. May 17 at 8. Tickets at the door.) . . . **CARLO GRANTE:** Pianist, in music by Alessandro Platti and Liszt. (Merkin Concert Hall. May 17 at 9.) . . . **NEW YORK YOUTH SYMPHONY:** Miguel Harth-Bedoya leads Holst's "The Planets," a new work by Michael Nathaniel Hersch, and Copland's "A Lincoln Portrait" (with Mandy Patinkin narrating). (Carnegie Hall. May 18 at 3.) . . . **MADELEINE SHAPIRO:** Performing acoustic and electronic works for cello. (Bloomingdale House, 323 W. 108th St. 663-6021. May 18 at 3.) . . . **CANTERBURY CHORAL SOCIETY:** Handel's "Samson." (Church of the Heavenly Rest, Fifth Ave. at 90th St. May 18 at 4. Tickets at the door.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

Katchor's World—An unnamed gentleman arrives at Trampoline Hall, a nineteenth-century building on Roman Boulevard which is "the deconsecrated temple of a secret masticator's lodge," to give a lecture on urban navigation and a radical development called Carfare City. The talk is "an analysis of how we find our way around the city, and the utopian solution to that problem," says Ben Katchor, the author of the cartoon strip "Julius Knipl, Real Estate Photographer," as well as the voice delivering this illustrated lecture and the creator of its fictional venue, audience, and subject. "It's like a play inside a lecture," he explains. "It's really quite simple when you see it." (An example of Katchor's work, by the way, appears on this page.) (New York Public Library, Mid-Manhattan Branch, Fifth Ave. at 40th St. May 14 at 6. No tickets necessary.)

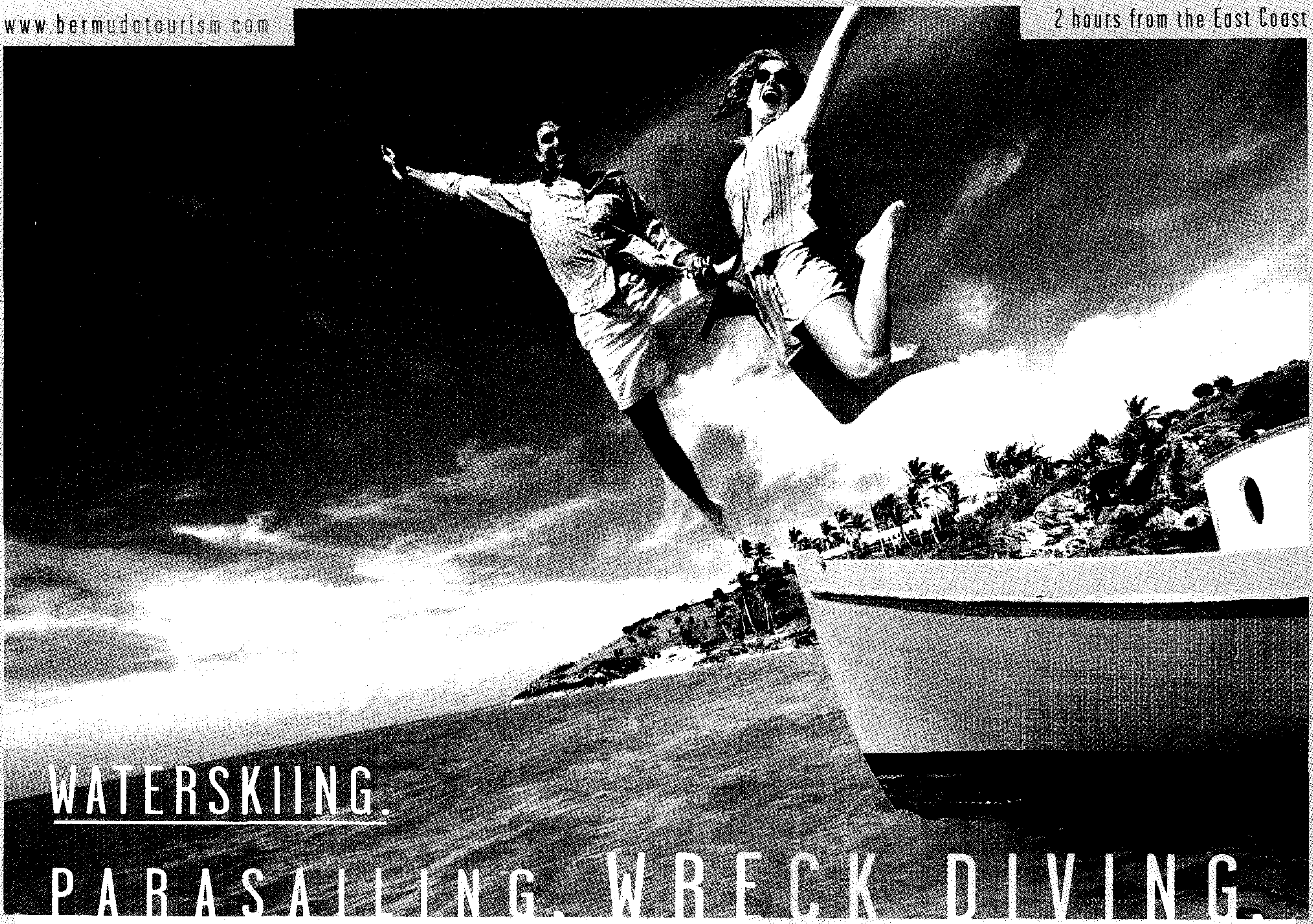
Modern Times—May 14 at 6: Architectural historian Matthew A. Postal argues that the idea of preserving modern buildings is no longer oxymoronic. (Municipal Art Society, 457 Madison Ave., at 51st St. 935-3960.) . . . ¶ May 18, from noon to 5: Nine postwar skyscrapers in lower Manhattan throw open their doors for self-guided tours. Organized by the Alliance for Downtown New York. For information, call 566-6700.

Postmodern Times—May 16 at 7:30: Architecture critic Herbert Muschamp gives the opening address at a symposium on Frank Gehry, which continues through the following day and counts the architect himself and his patron Peter B. Lewis among its participants. (Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St. 423-3587.) . . . ¶ May 20 at 7: Peter Eisenman ventures to the borough of his next major project to discuss contemporary architecture. (Staten Island Institute of Arts & Sciences, 75 Stuyvesant Pl. 718-727-1135, ext. 15.)

Readings—May 14 at 7: Poet Robert Creeley reads the verse of Robert Duncan. (Poets House, 72 Spring St. Tickets at the door.) . . . ¶ May 15 at 6:30: Mr. Creeley reads his own works. (Biblio's, 317 Church St. For reservations, call 693-0405.) . . . ¶ May 18 at 7: Martha McPhee reads her fiction, and Mark Svenvold reads his poetry. (K.G.B., 85 E. 4th St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ May 18 at 7:30: Actors Eli Wallach and Anne Jackson read stories by Isaac Babel and Isaac Bashevis Singer. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330.) . . . ¶ May 20 at 8: Julian Barnes and A. S. Byatt read from their fiction. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100.)

Talks—May 14 at 6:30: Attorneys for Sotheby's and Christie's join gallery owner André Emmerich, *ARTnews* publisher Milton Esterow, and others to consider the art market and the law. (The Association of the Bar of the City of New York, 42 W. 44th St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ May 15 at 7: *Daily News* editor Pete Hamill, sportswriter Roger Kahn, and former Brooklyn Dodgers outfielder Gene Hermanski talk about life since team owner Walter O'Malley abandoned Ebbets Field for downtown Los Angeles. (New-York Historical Society, 2 W. 77th St., at Central Park W. 873-3400.) . . . ¶ May 16 at 6: Rainer Herrn, scientific director of the Magnus Hirschfeld Institute in Berlin, discusses the pioneering German scientist's theories on homosexuality. (Lesbian and Gay Community Services Center, 208 W. 13th St. No tickets necessary.)

BEN KATCHOR



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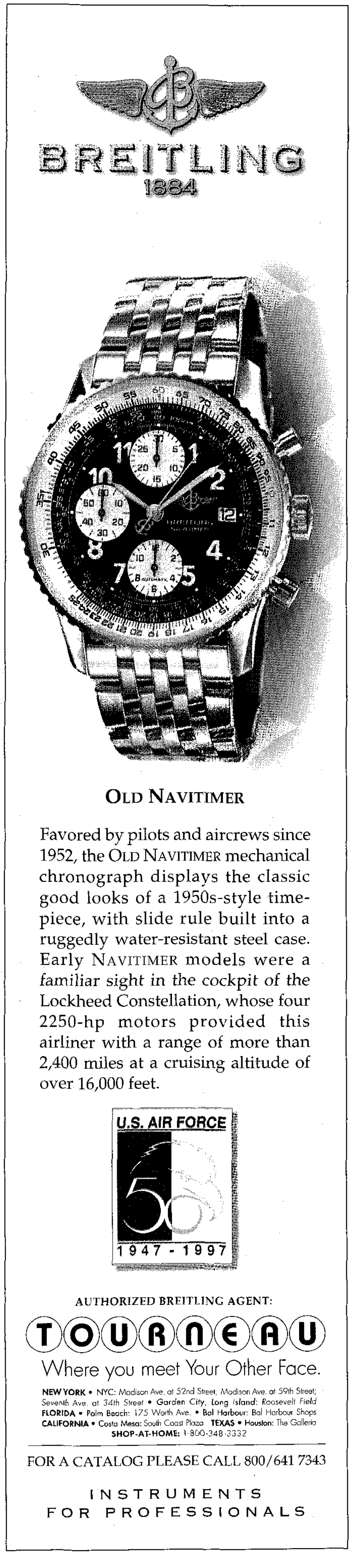

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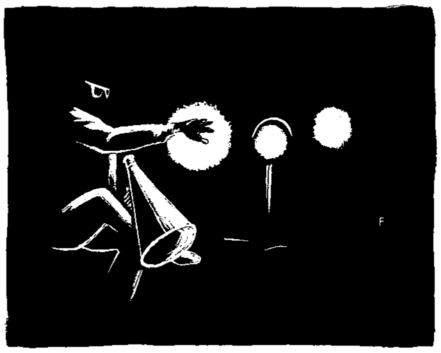


THE MOVIES

FILMS OPENING THIS WEEK

Brothers in Trouble—Udayan Prasad's tale of a group of Pakistani men living in Britain illegally. Opening May 14. (Film Forum.)

Love! Valour! Compassion!—Terrence McNally's adaptation of his 1994 play, about eight gay men who spend three summer weekends together in the country. Directed by Joe Mantello. Opening May 16. (Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema 3rd Avenue, Lincoln Square, and Village Theatre VII.)

Night Falls on Manhattan—A Manhattan district attorney (Andy Garcia) finds his idealism clashing with political realities, in a film written and directed by Sidney Lumet. Also starring Richard Dreyfuss, Lena Olin, and Ian Holm. Opening May 16. (East 85th Street.)

La Promesse—In Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne's drama, a fifteen-year-old boy's promise to a dying worker brings him into conflict with his ruthless father. In French. Opening May 16. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.)

Rudyard Kipling's The Second Jungle Book: Mowgli and Baloo—The boy Mowgli (Jamie Williams), his animal friends (and enemies), and an assorted group of human beings make up the cast of a live-action adventure story directed by Duncan McLachlan. Opening May 16. (64th & 2nd.)

Sprung—A comedy about a true love whose course does not run smooth, starring Rusty Cundieff (who also directed) and Joe Torry as guys on the make, and Tisha Campbell and Paula Jai Parker as the women they set their sights on. Opening May 14. (Criterion Center and Village East Cinemas.)

The Van—A couple of of middle-aged Dubliners (Colm Meaney and Donal O'Kelly) find their friendship challenged when they go into business selling fish and chips from a van, in a movie adapted by Roddy Doyle from the final novel of his Barrytown Trilogy ("The Commitments" and "The Snapper" were the others) and directed by Stephen Frears. Opening May 16. (Angelika Film Center and Cinema I.)

CURRENT FILMS

(The signed notes are by Bruce Diones, Sarah Kerr, Anthony Lane, and Terrence Rafferty. If a movie has been reviewed in The Current Cinema, the date of its review is given. Theatre information is listed on page 36.)

Anaconda—Luis Llosa's large-deadly-animal movie, set in the Amazon, doesn't bother much with exposition or characterization—it's almost comically impatient to get to the gruesome stuff—and the whole thing is over in an economical ninety minutes. Although it's refreshing to see an action movie that doesn't pretend to be something it isn't, this frankness has a downside, because what the picture so unapologetically *is* isn't, in fact, much. With Jon Voight, Jennifer Lopez, Eric Stoltz, and Ice Cube.—T.R. (4/21/97) (84th Street Sixplex, Orpheum VII, State, and Village East Cinemas.)

Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery—Mike Myers looks groovy in crushed-velvet suits in this parody of James Bond films and the swinging London of the sixties. The jokes are hit and miss, but Myers, who plays dual roles (he's the super-sleuth photographer of the title, who's awakened from a cryogenic sleep he entered in 1967, and he's also Dr. Evil) and has upped the ante by writing his own script, delivers every line with a gentle, toothy, hilarious abandon. The film runs long—there's not nearly as much happening as in a true Bond adventure—but it has some priceless moments of Richard Lester-like mod filmmaking. (The director is Jay Roach.) And Elizabeth Hurley, as the spy who helps Powers make the transition to the nineties, has a fine, dry way of setting up Myers's better jokes, much as Barbara Feldon did for Don Adams in "Get Smart."—B.D. (Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, State, Sutton, and Village Theatre VII.)

Breakdown—A well-made if not particularly original highway thriller, starring Kurt Russell as a man whose wife (Kathleen Quinlan) vanishes while they're vacationing in the Southwest. The director, Jonathan Mostow, milks a lot of anxiety out of dusty desert roads and creepy diners, building a fine suspense machine as Russell, in an impressive performance, tracks a menacing trucker (J. T. Walsh) who may be responsible for his wife's disappearance. The film's leisurely pace—its very casualness—is the key to its success. By eliminating fancy camera setups and unnecessary dialogue, Mostow (who co-wrote the script with Sam Montgomery) delivers a neat, streamlined (and gratifyingly unhyped) summer flick.—B.D. (Astor Plaza, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Olympia, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Showplace, and Waverly.)

Broken English—A fierce début by a New Zealand director, Gregor Nicholas. The core of the movie's energy is Nina (Aleksandra Vujcic), a young Croatian woman who escapes the war in the former Yugoslavia to join the rest of her family in Auckland. Her dedication to sex and booze certainly marks her as a free spirit, but standing firmly in her path is her terrifying father (Rade Serbedzija), who is particularly incensed by the complexities of her love life: she decides to marry a Chinese immigrant for money while having an affair with a Maori. Such racial and sexual mixups have often been fodder for farce, but Nicholas is too doomy and anguished to let humor spoil the mood. The best reason to stay with the picture is Vujcic (this is her début, too): only the depth of her brooding and her chronic urge to break away stop the film from descending into rant.—A.L. (5/12/97) (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Square.)

Chasing Amy—In Kevin Smith's low-budget comedy, a young comic-book artist (Ben Affleck) falls in love with a pretty, vivacious blonde (Joey Lauren Adams), who is, inconveniently, a lesbian. Smith doesn't have the skill to maintain a pleasurable sense of anticipation for an entire movie; this picture, his third, is as crummy-looking and as sluggishly paced as his début feature, the 1994 "Clerks."—T.R. (4/7/97) (Angelika Film Center, Cinema II, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, and 34th St. East.)

Children of the Revolution—This odd and fractured black comedy, a first feature from the Australian director Peter Duncan, is, you might say, too original for its own good: Duncan spends so much time trying to be different that he's in constant danger of losing the thread. Still, the basic conceit is sharp and appealing. In the nineteen-fifties, at a party conference in Moscow, a devoted Australian Communist (Judy Davis) meets Joseph Stalin (F. Murray Abraham), who in the course of an interesting evening woos her, impregnates her, and dies on her. She raises her child, Joe (Richard Roxburgh), as if he were the true son of her sad and exhausted husband (Geoffrey Rush). The adult Joe cultivates both a mustache and a set of implacable attitudes, which leave us in no doubt about his genetic inheritance. The film is a frenzy of newsreels, stills, slow motion, and mock interviews, although its best moments are, arguably, the quiet, shabby scenes of family life. Davis is as funny and fidgety as ever, and Rush gives a delicate picture of moral defeat, but Abraham is a vulgar disaster: if Stalin is a complete joke, what is there to be scared of?—A.L. (5/12/97) (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Square.)

The Daytrippers—A Long Island schoolteacher (Hope Davis) suspects her husband (Stanley Tucci) of infidelity, and confesses her fears to her parents (Anne Meara and Pat McNamara), her sister (Parker Posey), and her sister's boyfriend (Liev Schreiber). The whole group then piles into the car and heads for Manhattan, hoping to pick up the elusive husband's scent. This low-budget début feature by the writer and director Greg Mottola is no big deal, but it has a terrific ensemble, and Mottola's affection for the characters is obvious.—T.R. (3/24/97) (Eastside Playhouse, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Village East Cinemas.)

The Designated Mourner—Mike Nichols, Miranda Richardson, and David de Keyser talk their way through David Hare's film version of Wallace Shawn's discursive, apocalyptic play. (Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema.) (Angelika Film Center and 68th St. Playhouse.)

Diary of a Seducer—The Kierkegaard novel of the same name functions as an aphrodisiac for two Parisian students (Chiara Mastroianni and Melvil Poupaud), in a movie written and directed by Danièle Dubroux. In French. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

The English Patient—Written and directed by Anthony Minghella, from the novel by Michael Ondaatje, this long and searching movie tangles together a number of stories and characters: Almásy (Ralph Fiennes) and Katharine (Kristin Scott Thomas), who have an affair in North Africa before the Second World War; a French-Canadian nurse (Juliette Binoche) who cares for the badly burned Almásy after the war, and the Sikh soldier (Naveen Andrews) *she* has an affair with; and the mysterious Caravaggio (Willem Dafoe), a scavenging thief who appears to know the secrets of Almásy's past. The triumph of the film lies not just in the force and range of the performances but in Minghella's creation of an intimate epic: vast landscapes mingle with the minute details of desire, and the combination is transfixing.—A.L. (11/25/96) (Embassy 3 and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Fathers' Day—Billy Crystal and Robin Williams star in a comedy about two men on a search for a boy each thinks may be his son. Also with Nastassja Kinski, Julia Louis-Dreyfus, and Charlie Hofheimer. Directed by Ivan Reitman; screenplay by Lowell Ganz and Babaloo Mandell. (Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema.) (Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, New York Twin, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII.)

Fetishes—Nick Broomfield's documentary about professional dominatrices at a bondage parlor in New York City. (Cinema Village.)

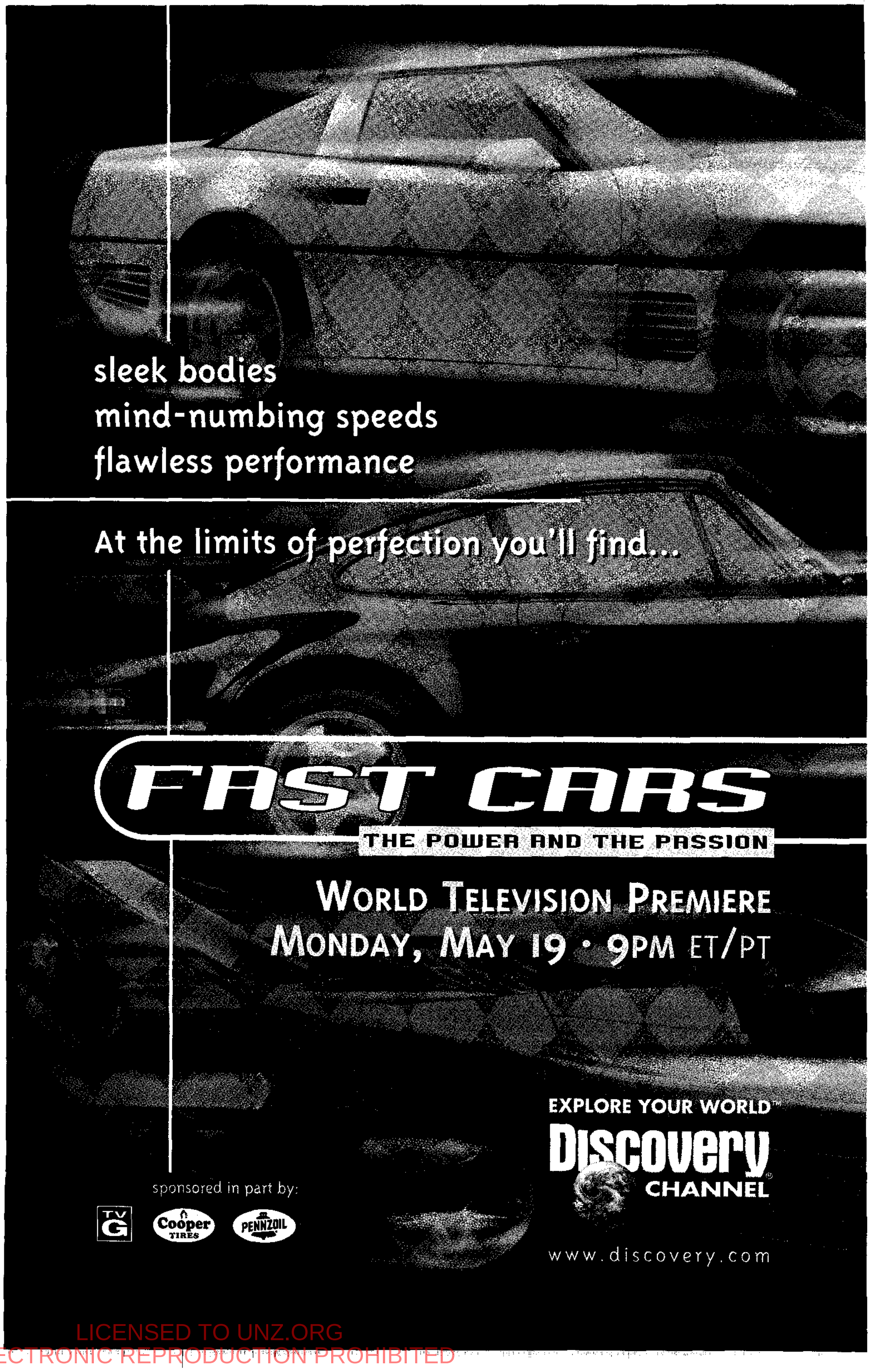
The Fifth Element—A New York City cabdriver (Bruce Willis) is the hero of a futuristic story of good versus evil. With Milla Jovovich, Gary Oldman, Ian Holm, and Chris Tucker. Directed by Luc Besson. (Criterion Center, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Olympia, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, and Village Theatre VII.)

Flamenco—A documentary-cum-love letter to the wizardly singing, dancing, and guitar playing of the Gypsies of southern Spain. Carlos Saura has gathered dozens of performers and had them do their thing in front of an exquisitely simple white backdrop. He relies on Vittorio Storaro's rich cinematography and, of course, on the inherent passion of the genre to hold our interest, and most of the time they do—though the endless succession of numbers sometimes feels like too much of a good thing. Curiously, the singers appear to better advantage than the dancers—they're more spontaneous. Storaro closes in on their tearful eyes and ravaged faces; one huge woman walks right up to the camera and starts screaming. With the guitarist Paco de Lucía, the singing duo Lole y Manuel, and the gorgeous young Joaquín Cortés, who dances a studly bare-chested solo.—S.K. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

***Grosse Pointe Blank**—The screenplay has a high-*concept premise: professional hit man goes home to attend his tenth high-school reunion. Both the star, John Cusack, and the director, George Armitage, appear to have the sense to play the outrageous material straight, and the opening half hour consists of a series of terrific revue-type sketches; the killer's session with his very reluctant psychiatrist (Alan Arkin) is a classic routine. But gradually the film's poker-faced manner begins to lose its novelty; the picture stalls, and then starts to coast downhill, apparently unaware that the motor has stopped running. Also with Minnie Driver, Dan Aykroyd, Joan Cusack, Jeremy Piven, and Hank Azaria.—T.R. (4/21/97) (Cinema I, 84th Street Sixplex, 86th Street East Twin, Guild, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, and Village Theatre VII.)

Irma Vep—Olivier Assayas has fun with the pretensions of French cinema in this mostly charming lampoon of filmmaking. The plot concerns a troubled director (Jean-Pierre Léaud) whose insistence on casting the Hong Kong superstar Maggie Cheung (playing herself) in his remake of the classic French silent "Les Vampires" brings him close to ruin. (Cheung, whose costume for the feature is a tight black latex cat-woman suit, falls in love with the character she's playing and begins living her real life like a movie.) Assayas dramatizes the movie set with some nicely drawn minor characters; Nathalie Richard, as a wardrobe mistress with a crush on Cheung, is particularly sweet. Echoes of French films, especially Truffaut's, run rampant, but the humor is never vindictive. The cinematic tricks (handheld cameras, odd sound effects, and so forth) don't always work, and some of the script's eccentricities seem gratuitously highbrow, but there's some fun to be had here. In French and English.—B.D. (Film Forum 3.)

Kolya—A likable enough Czech reworking of a tried-and-true formula: a sort of "Kramer vs. Kramer" set in Prague, in 1988-89, at the dawn of the Velvet Revolution. The screenwriter, Zdenek Sverak, also plays the central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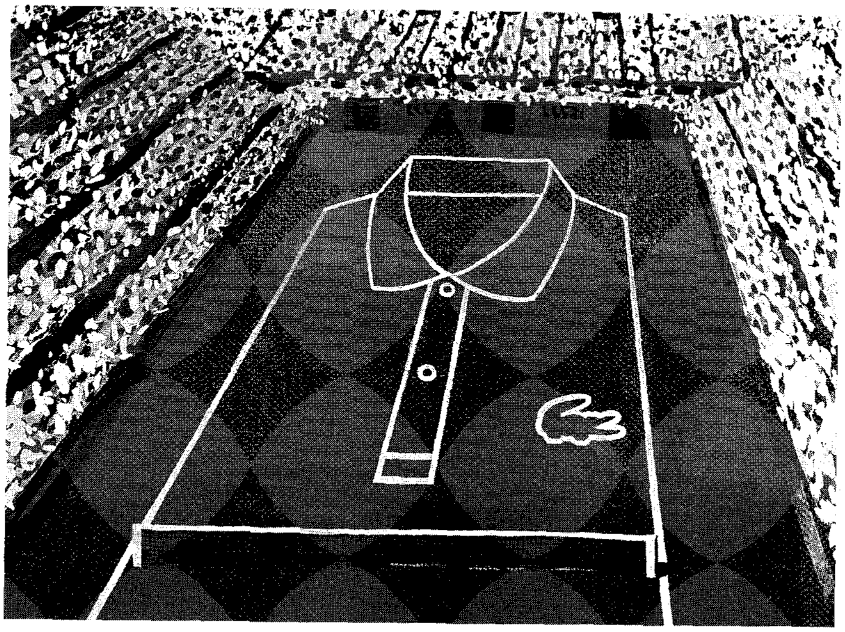

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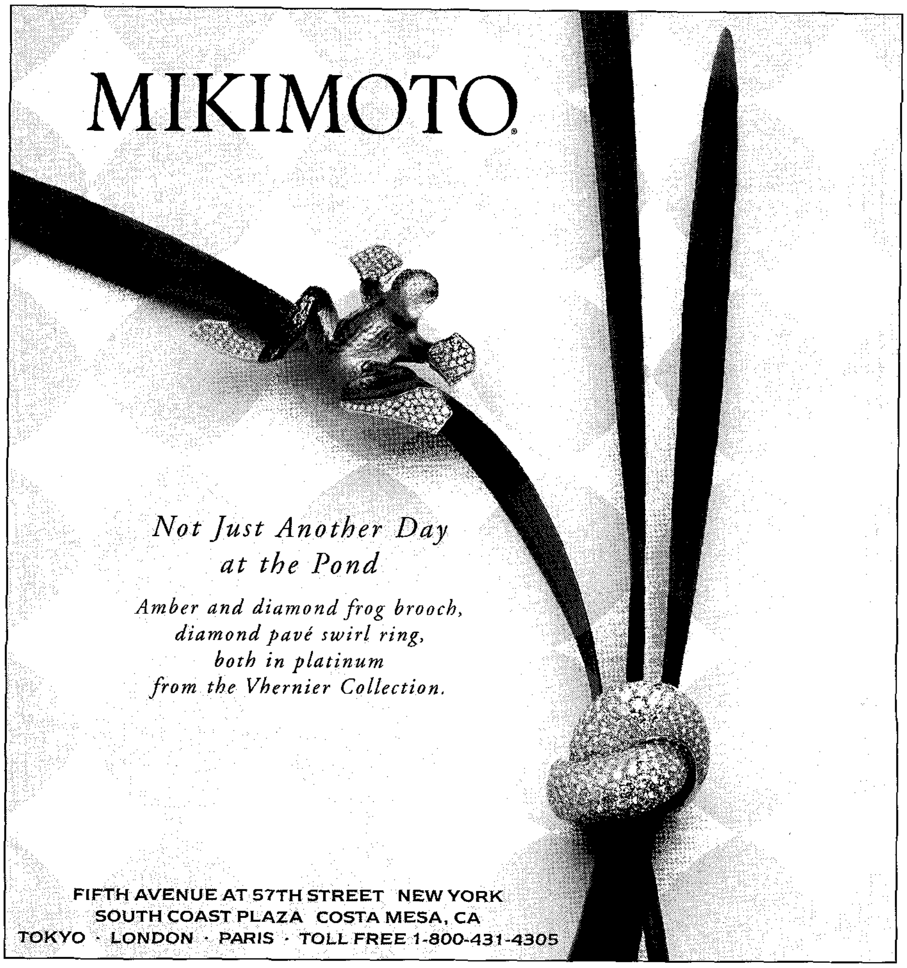

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character, a bachelor cellist who suddenly finds himself responsible for an adorable Russian five-year-old. The cellist slowly grows out of his selfishness, and his love for this child who doesn't speak his language points to the new, boundaryless world that's about to open up. Directed by Jan Sverak. In Czech.—S.K. (First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and The Screening Room.)

Liar Liar—Tom Shadyac's movie stars Jim Carrey as a lying lawyer whose life is upended when his five-year-old son makes a birthday wish that, for exactly one day, his father will be incapable of telling a lie. As he peels away the layers of venal charm, you wait to discover an even more pungent venality beneath. Instead—guess what—he turns out to be a nice guy, and you feel let down when he finally surrenders to the forces of mush. But it's touching to find a director who believes in all sincerity that jokes about gas and pimples are, and always will be, inherently funny.—A.L. (3/31/97) (Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema, National Twin, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 34th Street Showplace, and Waverly.)

Murder at 1600—Wesley Snipes and Diane Lane star as a detective and a Secret Service agent investigating a homicide at a well-known Washington address, in a thriller directed by Dwight Little. (Chelsea Cinemas, Coronet Cinemas, Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, and Orpheum VII.)

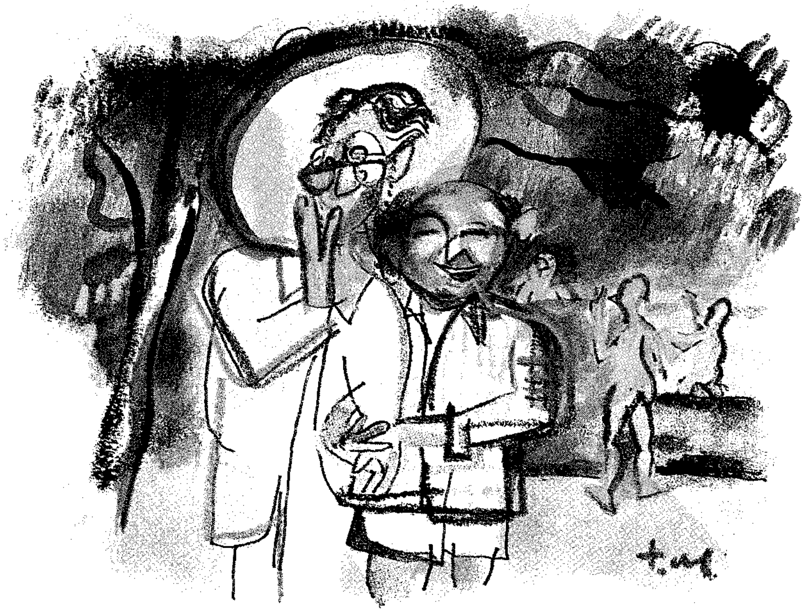
Nowhere—A day in the life of an eighteen-year-old Angeleno (James Duval) and his omnisexual friends and acquaintances. Written and directed by Gregg Araki. With Rachel True and Christina Applegate. (Quad Cinema.)

Paradise Road—Bruce Beresford wrote and directed this stirring but rather stiff tale of women imprisoned by the Japanese in the Second World War. Redemption, such as it is, comes from a choir that the prisoners create, which performs scores written down from memory. (All of this, apparently, is drawn from life, and the scores still exist.) The cast, like the prisoners, is an international roundup: Glenn Close, Julianna Margulies, Frances McDormand, Pauline Collins, Jennifer Ehle, Joanna Ter Steege, and Cate Blanchette. The movie can be heartbreaking, but once it's over your heart mends with surprising speed.—A.L. (4/14/97) (Manhattan Twin.)

Romy and Michele's High School Reunion—Two ditzes, best friends since childhood, go to their tenth-year high-school reunion determined to prove that they're no longer losers. Romy and Michele (Mira Sorvino and Lisa Kudrow) started out as bit parts in a play by Robin Schiff; apparently the characters were so funny that Schiff was invited to give them a movie of their own. It's easy to see why someone thought an idiot buddy movie with girls was a fresh idea, but the writing isn't clever enough or daringly stupid enough to produce big laughs. And, while the stars are intensely likable, they're both rather narrow specialists: Sorvino does her vulnerable smile, and Kudrow reacts to people inappropriately, but neither goes all the way over the top. Directed by David Mirkin.—S.K. (84th Street Sixplex, 86th Street East Twin, Embassy 1, Gotham Cinema, 19th Street East 6, and Village East Cinemas.)

The Saint—Even the gadgetry in this splendidly misconceived Phillip Noyce movie is second-rate. Val Kilmer, in the leading role, is fine at negotiating all the camp costume changes, but he remains more weird than suave. As for Elisabeth Shue, she is far too worried and wounded—too serious an actress, in a way—to look as if she might enjoy this nonsense. And what undiluted nonsense it is! No one has the guts to play it for the laughs that the movie needs; you can feel the agony as the half-jokes die in the air.—A.L. (4/14/97) (Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, and State. . . . ¶ East 85th Street; through May 15.)

Sling Blade—Billy Bob Thornton wrote and directed this dunderheaded film, in which he plays a simpleton who, released from an asylum for the criminally insane after serving twenty-five years for the murder of his mother



TIM MOORE

Opening May 16, John Glover and Jason Alexander in "Love! Valour! Compassion!"

and her lover, returns to his poor Southern home town and ends up befriending a small boy and defending him against *his* mom's abusive boyfriend. Although the film does have two terrific actors—Dwight Yoakam, as the menacing boyfriend, and John Ritter, as a gay store manager—its critical success is mystifying; it's hard to believe that anybody could fall for its dim homilies.—B.D. (Art Greenwich Twin, Carnegie Hall Cinemas, and Manhattan Twin.)

UNDERWORLD—An ex-con (Denis Leary) spends Father's Day getting even with the men who brutally beat up his father seven years earlier. With Joe Mantegna and Annabella Sciorra. Written by Larry Bishop; directed by Roger Christian. (Criterion Center, Regency, Sutton, and Village East Cinemas.)

VOLCANO—Tommy Lee Jones stars as the director of L.A.'s emergency-management team, who, like a municipal Bob Villa, is trying to find ways of blocking off some streets in order to sluice the boiling lava that has just erupted from the La Brea Tar Pits into the sea. While gamely saving a few homes and businesses from destruction, he meets a seismologist, perkily played by Anne Heche, who helps explain just what a volcanic eruption is and what humanity needs to do in response to this natural disaster—mainly she keeps shouting to stand back from the lava flow. The film is poorly written, it has little suspense (most of the characters, strangely enough, don't get fried) and less humor, and the audience may feel that it's no big deal if L.A. burns a little—it wouldn't be the first time. But, unlike this year's earlier volcanic blowout, "Dante's Peak," it's never static: it has fast, no-nonsense pacing (the short, stupid lines are delivered swiftly) and an impressive number of camera setups. The director, Mick Jackson, keeps the effects moving along, and, with the screen burning brightly and the magnificent Dolby sound exploding on cue, the audience may warm to the movie as a good amusement-park ride.—B.D. (Chelsea West, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, Village East Cinemas, and Ziegfeld.)

WARRIORS OF VIRTUE—The adventures of a teenager (Mario Yedidia) transported to the fantasyland of Tao to help defeat a wicked warlord. Directed by Ronny Yu. (Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, and Orpheum VII.)

ALSO PLAYING

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Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **A BROTHER'S KISS:** Chelsea Cinemas. . . . **A CHEF IN LOVE:** Carnegie Hall Cinemas and Quad Cinema. . . . **COMMANDMENTS:** Beekman, Chelsea Cinemas, and Lincoln Square. . . . **CRASH** (3/31/97): Angelika Film Center. . . . **THE DEVIL'S OWN** (4/7/97): Lincoln Square. . . . **DONNIE BRASCO** (3/17/97): 64th and 2nd. . . . **DOUBLE TEAM:** Criterion Center. . . . **THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **FEMALE PERVERSIONS:** Quad Cinema. . . . **FOOLS RUSH IN:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **THE GODFATHER:** Embassy 2 and 34th Street Showplace. . . . **HOLLOW REED:** Quad Cinema. . . . **JERRY MAGUIRE** (12/16/96): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **KAMA SUTRA:** The Screening Room. . . . **KISSED:** Village East Cinemas. . . . **THE PEOPLE VS. LARRY FLYNT** (1/13/97): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **RETURN OF THE JEDI:** National Twin. . . . **RIPE:** Village East Cinemas. . . . **SCREAM:** Embassy 4. . . . **SECRETS & LIES:** Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **THAT OLD FEELING:** Coronet Cinemas. . . . **TRAVELLER:** Cinema 3rd Avenue and 62nd & Broadway. . . . **TRUTH OR CONSEQUENCES, N.M.:** State. . . . **TWIN TOWN:** Village Theatre VII. . . . **WAITING FOR GUFFMAN:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **WHEN WE WERE KINGS** (2/17/97): 59th Street East Cinema.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

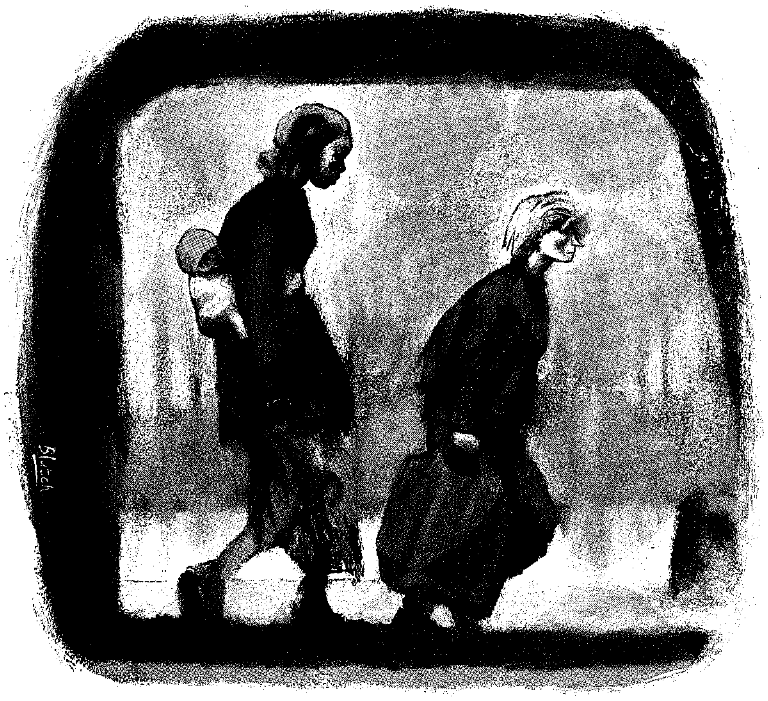
(For show times, call 777-FILM, except where noted.)

Angelika 57, 225 W. 57th St.
Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Carnegie Hall Cinemas, Seventh Ave. between 56th and 57th Sts.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinema I, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema II, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema 3rd Avenue, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St.
Coronet Cinemas, Third Ave. at 59th St.
Criterion Center, Broadway at 44th St.
East 85th Street, First Ave. at 85th St.
Eastside Playhouse, Third Ave. at 55th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
86th Street East Twin, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Embassy 1, Broadway at 46th St.
Embassy 2, 3, and 4, Seventh Ave. at 47th St.
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
Gotham Cinema, Third Ave. at 58th St.
Guild, 33 W. 50th St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St. (757-2280).
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Manhattan Twin, Third Ave. at 59th St.
Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
National Twin, Broadway at 44th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
Regency, Broadway at 67th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
68th St. Playhouse, Third Ave. at 68th St.
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
State, Broadway at 45th St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34th St. East, 241 E. 34th St.
34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Waverly 1 and 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between Eighth and Ninth Aves.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

REVIVALS

(The following notes are by Michael Sragow. Theatre addresses and phone numbers appear with the listings following these notes.)

Broadway Bill (1934)—In Frank Capra's tangy racetrack spree, happy-go-lucky Dan Brooks (Warner Baxter) leaves his plutocrat father-in-law's paper-box company to field the title horse in a high-stakes derby. His partner, Whitey (played by Clarence Muse, who, of course, is black), his feisty young sister-in-law, Alice (Myrna Loy), and a couple of con men (Raymond Walburn and Lynne Overman) offer emotional and comic support. The picture isn't smoothed out and sentimental in the manner of Capra's "Mister (Blank) Goes to (Blank)" movies; the climactic heartbreak here is apt and disturbing. And when the characters erupt in song, their giddiness seems genuine. Loy doesn't overdo Alice's charm—her winsomeness grows on you as it does on her brother-in-law. Baxter's Dan is bluff and hearty in the Gable manner: he acts rough-and-tumble with everyone, especially Whitey. That may bother viewers today, but Muse's unembarrassed scene-stealing is a cagey joy. When Whitey asks Dan, "Boss, you mind if I have an idea?," there's no question about whom you're supposed to side with. (Muse played Whitey again in Capra's 1950 remake, "Riding High," and appeared in another celebrated horse saga, Carroll Ballard's "The Black Stallion.") (Film Forum 2; May 15-16.)



Opening May 16, Assita Ouedraogo and Jérémie Rénier in "La Promesse."

BLITCH

Dracula (1979)—Whether he's dazzling a party full of stuffed shirts or lurking in a catacomb, Frank Langella's Dracula is as smooth as coffin lining; even when he takes a bride—or, rather, a victim—he comes after her with a fey elegance, his shirt casually unbuttoned. Langella's soft, pleasing vampire clicked in the 1977 Broadway revival (with its celebrated Edward Gorey sets) of the 1927 play, in which you didn't see the workings of his fangs, and he had much more life than anyone else. But here the director, John Badham, has dropped him into the center of a cluttered, hyperbolic horror movie. The myth's clarity gets mussed, and between the manglings and the bouts of body-slamming action the actors have little space for characterization. Even Laurence Olivier's vampire hunter, Van Helsing, is a stultifying fellow. Kate Nelligan, playing Dracula's main erotic mark, is saddled with a role too badly written for her to create much more than a sexual impression; nonetheless, the movie peaks when she and Langella exchange hot glances in a cold castle. W. D. Richter's script draws on Bram Stoker's original novel as well as on Hamilton Deane and John L. Balderston's stage adaptation. Gil Taylor did the opulent cinematography. (Museum of Modern Art; May 17 and May 19.)

Fox and His Friends (1974)—Rainer Werner Fassbinder wrote the script and directed himself in the role of a good-hearted gay carny ("Fox the Talking Head") who wins half a million marks in a lottery and falls prey to a rapacious haut-bourgeois homosexual, Eugen (Peter Chatel), who "educates" him while fleecing him. Fox is so hapless and Eugen so calculating that Fassbinder seems to be saying that earthiness and culture are equally overrated. The plot is ripe for vicious parody, but the movie sinks leadenly from wistful comic romance into weepy masochistic melodrama. Cinematography by Michael Ballhaus. In German. (Walter Reade Theatre; May 14.)

The Matinee Idol (1928)—The restoration of this long-lost Frank Capra silent is a marvel of computer technology; the picture itself—about a blackface musical-comedy star (Johnnie Walker) who stumbles onto an inadvertently hilarious hick-town theatre troupe (featuring Bessie Love)—is an engaging curio. In his autobiography, Capra wrote, "I tried mixing in another so-called sure-fire ingredient with comedy—a little love story. It seemed to work." In the best scenes, it does: when Walker tries to snuggle into Love's arms while playing a dying soldier in the company's Civil War melodrama, their furtive play of hands tickles the laughs out of you. But the inventiveness peters away once Walker and his city-slicker friends book the troupe on Broadway as a comedy act, and in the finale and epilogue we get the first risings of the torrential Capra sap. The movie is still worth seeing for the funny stuff. Elmer Harris and Peter Milne wrote the script, from the story "Come Back to Aaron," by Robert Lord and Ernest S. Pagano. (Film Forum 2; May 15-16.)

Why We Fight: Prelude to War (1942)—The first entry in the seven-film series of U.S. Army documentaries which Frank Capra produced—arresting, volatile mixtures of partisan journalism and motivational filmmaking. This introduction is a key example of Capra's knack for bold generalization and oversimplification: it divides the planet into "the slave world" and "the free world," with the Soviet Union as part of the latter. But the filmmaking is often breathtaking. Capra turns Nazi preening against itself, particularly in a chilling montage centered on the German soldiers' goose step. The movie shows how changing the context can alter the effect of the content: the Nazis' delusions of Wagnerian grandeur here become nightmares of mass psychosis and geopolitical kleptomania. (Film Forum 2; May 20.)

Why We Fight: The Nazis Strike (1943)—The second of the Frank Capra-produced series introduces geopolitics ("the military control of space") as the basis of Hitler's view of the world as masses of "labor and raw material" ripe for plundering. This one exemplifies the films' striking use of animation to analyze military campaigns, such as the German onslaught of Poland: cut off from one another by encircling "pincers," the Polish positions ultimately evaporate inside ghastly shrinking doughnuts. The documentary also contains a dubious apologia for the Soviets' non-aggression pact with Germany, rationalizing it as a ploy for Stalin to buy time. (Film Forum 2; May 20.)

Why We Fight: Divide and Conquer (1943)—In the third film of the series Frank Capra produced, Nazi forces soften up Scandinavia and the Low Countries with propaganda and sedition before using them to further perfect the art of blitzkrieg. Gallomaniacs may object to the depiction of France as a "cynical and disillusioned nation" (save for the gumption of de Gaulle), but even they will be gripped by the lucid presentation of Germany penetrating the supposedly impassable Ardennes Forest. A cartoon diagram of Germany's tank attack renders the combination of armored vehicles, motorized troops, and supply trucks as a monstrous military erection. (Film Forum 2; May 20.)

LATE RUNS, CLASSICS, ETC.

(Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.)

Film Forum 2, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—Through June 12: A retrospective of films directed by Frank Capra.

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—Through May 20: In celebration of the centenary of the publication of Bram Stoker's "Dracula," the museum is showing forty of the vampire's many incarnations. . . . ¶ Through June 2: A program of films celebrating the twenty-fifth anniversary of the distribution company Women Make Movies.

Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center (875-5600)—Through June 5: Films directed by Rainer Werner Fassbinder.

Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—May 20 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "The Sexual Life of the Belgians" (1994, Jan Boucquoy; in French).

American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Through June 1: Films directed by Peter Greenaway.

Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (864-5400)—A series of musical films, each preceded by a short cabaret performance featuring the music of the film's composer. May 20 at 7:30: Peter Howard will sing songs by George M. Cohan, followed by a screening of "Yankee Doodle Dandy" (1942, Michael Curtiz).

A Different Light Bookstore, 151 W. 19th St.—A Sunday-night series of free films (and popcorn). On May 18 at 7, the feature will be "Mildred Pierce" (1945, Michael Curtiz).

Anthology Film Archives, 32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5110)—May 14-15 at 6 and May 16 at 6:20: "Lamerica" (1994, Gianni Amelio; in Italian). . . . May 14-15 at 8:30: "The Cousins" (1959, Claude Chabrol; in French) and "Le Beau Serge" (1958, Chabrol; in French). . . . May 16-19 at 6 and May 20 at 10: "The American Friend" (1977, Wim Wenders). . . . May 16 at 8:30 and 10:20, May 17-18 at 3:15, 8:30, and 10:15, May 19 at 8:20 and 10, and May 20 at 8:20 and 10:15: "The Incredible Shrinking Man" (1957, Jack Arnold).

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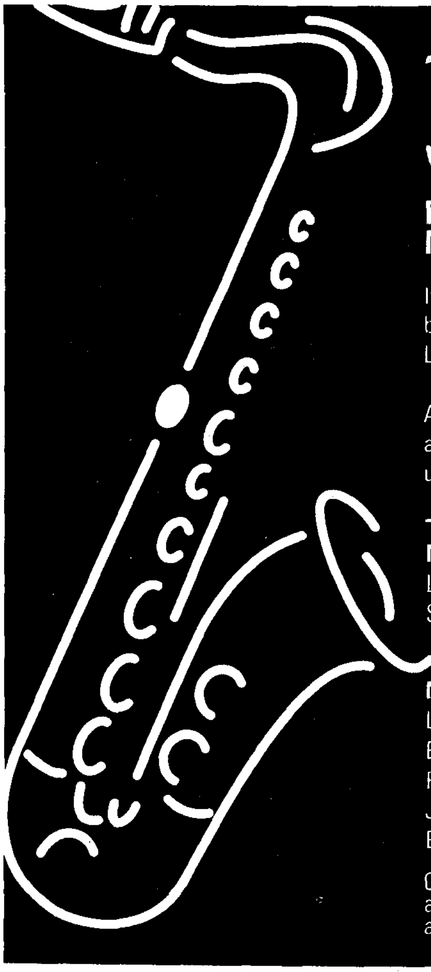

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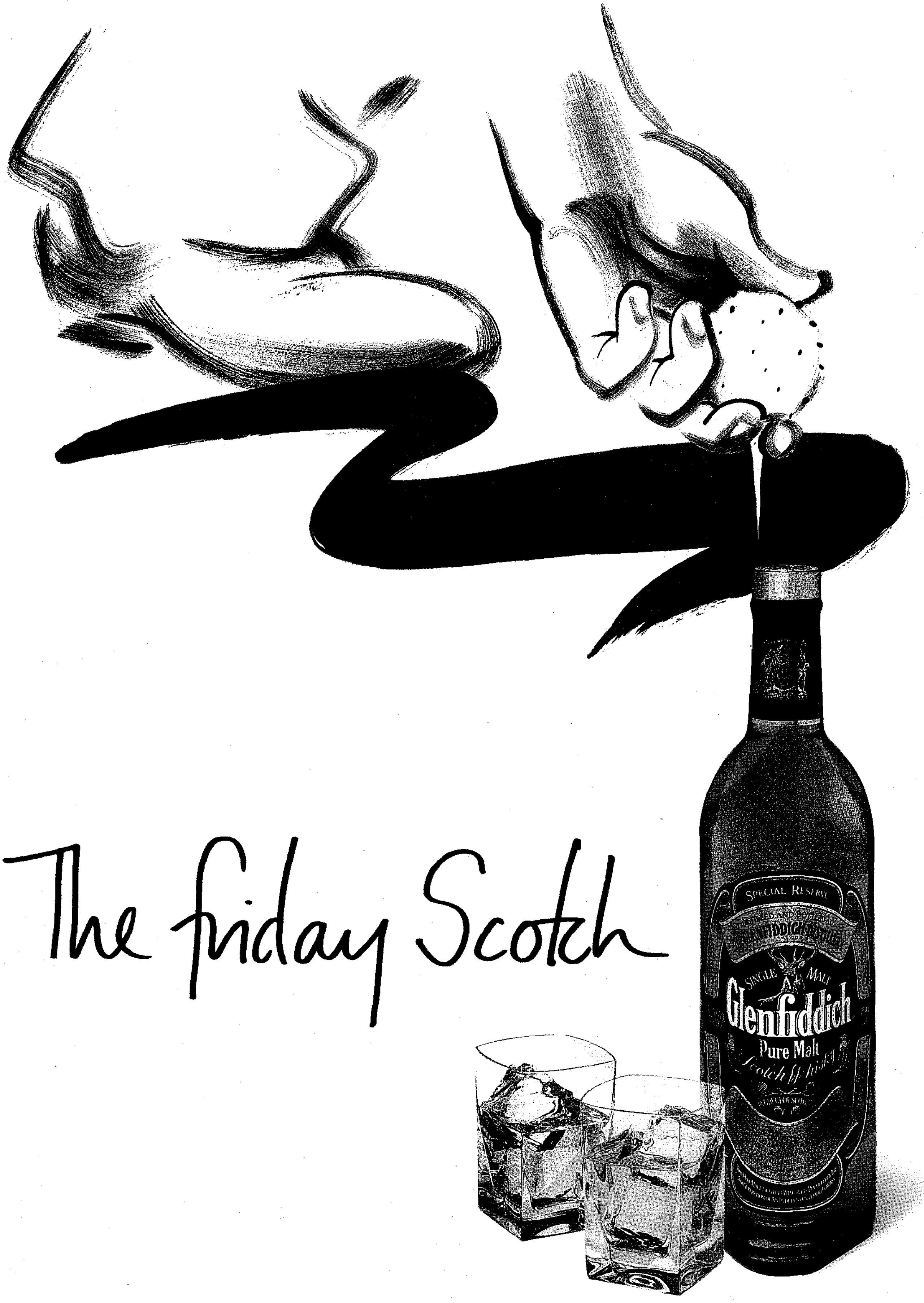
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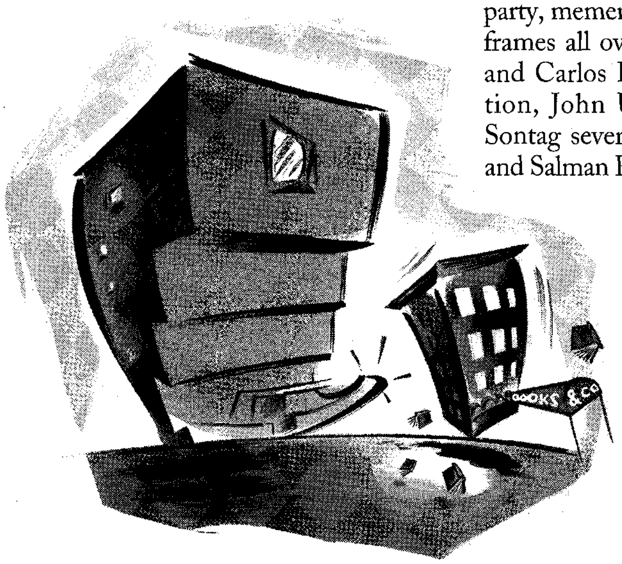
THE
NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

THE BOOK PARTY'S OVER

If there is any lesson in the impending demise of Books & Co., the literary landmark on Madison Avenue, it is that not even the Upper East Side is immune to the brutal philistinism of the world below Seventy-second Street, above Ninety-sixth Street, west of Central Park, and east of Lexington. No wonder Susan Sontag, Louis Auchincloss, Erica Jong, and many other literary lions have gathered at the bookstore in solidarity over the past few months to fret about the decline of civilization, shake their fists at those heartless bean counters at the Whitney Museum (who started the whole mess last fall, by upping Books & Co.'s rent by *2.5 per cent*), and, perhaps, flip through the new translation of Wislawa Szymborska's "View with a Grain of Sand" or the striking new SUNY edition of Heidegger's "Being and Time." Come May 31st, though, the store will close for good. So the question now is, What's next for Books & Co.? Or, rather, where next?



ILLUSTRATIONS BY ERIC PALMA

If the bookstore were to relocate, its needs would be extensive. The current space is just over four thousand square feet—two good-sized rooms with hardwood floors and charmingly exposed brick. These are important details, for Books & Co. achieved its great reputation in part because, over the twenty years of its existence, it has been host to one fabulous non-stop literary party, mementos of which are in picture frames all over the walls (Carly Simon and Carlos Fuentes deep in conversation, John Updike looking pixieish, Sontag severe, Paul Auster sphinxlike, and Salman Rushdie pixieish, severe, and sphinxlike). Once, the store's owner, the I.B.M. heiress Jeannette Watson, had a Robbie Burns evening, with donated Scotch, and a bagpiper out front, and a minister of the Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church roaming through the crowd declaiming from "Tam O'Shanter." Try doing *that* in the nasty little spaces that house most of Manhattan's independent bookstores.

At the same time, Watson is on something of a budget. The Whitney was charging her thirty-two dollars a square foot; last fall, it threatened to jack the rent up to thirty-two dollars and eighty cents a square foot (*eighty cents!*). That may seem like a lot of money until you consider that a store across the street just went for two hundred dollars a square foot, and if you walk even ten minutes down Madison Avenue the rents go as high as four hundred dollars a square foot. What Books & Co. had, really, was the equivalent of one of those legendary rent-control deals—you know, eleven rooms on Central Park West for four hundred and sixty a month—and that suggests that it is not going to be easy to find something equivalent (even though the store's clients are presumably the kind of people who know someone with eleven rooms on Central Park West for four hundred and sixty a month). Let's assume that Watson would be willing to split the difference between what she was paying and what the Whitney wanted—say, thirty-two dollars and forty cents. "I don't think you can get anything for less than fifty dollars a square foot in Manhattan right now, not even on Avenue A," says Faith Hope Consolo, of Garrick-Aug Worldwide, one of the city's leading retail-leasing firms. That leaves the outer boroughs and maybe New Jersey, but in a decent mall in Jersey, Consolo says, you're still looking at forty to sixty dollars a square foot.

"They had a sweetheart deal," Consolo says, with the little sigh that brokers always make when they talk of a sweetheart deal. "To get that kind of rent I think they're going to have to go to a residential neighborhood in the boroughs."

Just how far out in the boroughs is, of course, the key question, since one of the chief appeals of Books & Co. is the fact that it's only a four-dollar cab ride from Elaine's. On the other hand, if you go out far enough you have the advantage of being on the way to the Hamptons. In the *Times* real-estate listings this week, there's a former liquor store for rent on Cross Bay Boulevard in Howard Beach, Queens. Parking for thirty cars. And only twenty-two dollars a square foot! Would it work as a bookstore? "Like a Barnes & Noble? No problem," says the landlord, who seems like a much more congenial sort than the Whitney. "Used to be a library, as a matter of fact, before they moved the library across the street."

EMPTY SEATS

CONSIDER the quandary of Spike Lee. From his thousand-dollar courtside seat, he has become the most visible fan of the New York Knicks; come playoff season, he follows the team on the road. He even plans his filmmaking schedule around the playoffs. Art must wait for roundball. In the city, Lee is probably better known for his fandom than for his movies. And he has just published a basketball memoir of great charm and even greater fanaticism: "Best Seat in the House." "This is a very serious thing with me," he said the other day.

Ordinarily, Lee would be in Miami for the opening two games of the Knicks' playoff series with the Heat, but the complicating fact is that Lee's wife, Tonya, is nine months pregnant with their second child and Tonya suggested that were Spike to travel with the Knicks to Miami she might change the locks. "At least, that's what she's *intimated*," Lee said.

And so to avoid familial calamity—to do the right thing, so to speak—Lee took in Game One of the Knicks-Miami series at the All-Star Cafe, in Times Square. He ordered a beer and a turkey burger and delicately set his tiny portable telephone on the table.

"I can't miss the game," he said, "but, as you can see, I'm on a pretty short leash."

Lee is the most excitable and genuine of fans, even in a private room and with no cameras around. For the first half and more, the Knicks and the Heat competed for a trophy for dismal play, with the Knicks having the edge; finally, midway through the third quarter, the Knicks exploded, and so, too, did Lee. He was out of his seat, shouting, screaming, waving his arms. He seemed like a happy man, and, it must be noted, he *did* not glance once at the telephone on the table. He was already thinking past the Heat and to Michael Jordan's Bulls, who have beaten the Knicks in the playoffs for, it seems, the last four hundred years in a row.

"This is gonna be our year," Lee said. "A baby and a championship."

It was suggested that the baby was a surer thing than the defeat of Michael Jordan.

"No," said Spike Lee. "All of it. This is the year. This is it!"

COMMAND PERFORMANCE

The British playwright David Hare reports on an unusual theatrical run, way out of town:

MY adaptation of Chekhov's little-known early play "Ivanov" has found audiences standing in line all night outside the tiny Almeda Theatre, in Islington. The special pleasure has been to introduce people to a younger, more vigorous, and even more brutal Chekhov than the one they thought they knew. Late last month, however, we were in danger of turning our unique *succès fou* into a *folie de grandeur*, thanks to the theatre's slightly mad decision to accept an invitation to become the first British company ever to play Chekhov in Moscow.

As soon as we arrived for our four special performances in the gilded splendor of the Maly Theatre, where Stalin's personal box is still thoughtfully bulletproofed, it was clear that Jonathan Kent's revelatory production was not going to please everyone. For all the talk of Russians laughing one moment and bursting into tears the next, the convention here—one carefully nurtured by the Moscow Arts Theatre—is to play Chekhov with unrelieved seriousness, in order to achieve an intensely detailed naturalism.

Ivanov, in Ralph Fiennes's disturbing central performance, is a nineteenth-century Russian liberal, unable to show compassion for his dying wife because he is being driven mad by his own terminal despair. After a dress rehearsal before an audience of acting students and their teachers, we were in the unusual position for Englishmen of being told that we were showing far too much passion. "It's wrong," one person said, "to gesture in Chekhov." Someone else vehemently objected to the hero shooting himself in the middle of the stage. By tradition, the suicide must always take place at the side.

But, the next evening, at the formal first night, as the comedy of the first two acts died away and the serious themes of the play began to grip, we noticed a sudden stilling, that change in the air which comes from a theatrical feeling way beyond language. As Fiennes launched into the great monologue that begins, "How spent I am, how I despise myself," and then built toward the climax—"In love, I find no tenderness. In work I find no relief. In song I hear no music, in speeches I hear nothing new"—I realized that the Russians were not thinking, as the English did, that this was a study in despair, or, indeed, a portrait of anything at all. Instead, they were thinking, This is about us.

After the last performance, I met a famous Russian criminal, whose partner had recently been shot through the head. He told me how moved he had been by our version, and how wholly beyond his dreams it had been that an English company could show Russians how to perform Chekhov. "Now," he said to me, "you must attempt Dostoyevsky." I muttered something self-deprecating about this being a little trickier, how the Dostoyevskian sensibility might be beyond my reach. This got me nowhere. The Russian-mafia boss looked me straight in the eye and, in his low, gravelly voice, issued an order: "I'm telling you. Do Dostoyevsky."

WHO'S THAT GIRL?

A THIRD GRADER at the Spence School was watching a basketball game on TV a few weeks ago when the camera alighted on a melancholy-looking man in the stands next to a young Asian woman. "I said to my mom, 'What is my teacher doing sitting with Woody Allen?' " she recalled. "It was just really weird."

"What teacher?" her mother asked.

"Ms. Previn," the daughter answered.

She may have been the first Spence student to realize that the new reading teacher at school was Soon-Yi Previn, the notorious other woman in the Woody Allen–Mia Farrow scandal. Previn has been teaching at the élite private girls' school since January, when she arrived, very quietly, as one of four student teachers sent over by Columbia Teachers College.

"She's terrific," a school administrator said the other day. She added, "We're not a community who throw stones. This isn't Hester Prynne. She's only doing what we hope a Spence girl would do—developing her own life and capabilities."

Still, the school realized that the choice might be controversial. "She's got to be awfully good," the administrator said she told Columbia. "We may take some flak."

Curiously, Spence, which has a typically publicity-shy Manhattan-private-school parent body, hasn't taken any flak. Perhaps that's because in none of the voluminous correspondence that the school sends home on everything from the birth of spring to the minutes of the last Parents' Association meeting was any mention made of Soon-Yi.

"I thought, Oh my God, of all the schools in New York, why our school?" said a parent who read the news in a tabloid gossip column.

Spence's sophisticated upper schoolers weren't aware of the new lower-school teacher until the entire student body gathered in the cafeteria for an assembly, and an eighth grader recognized the tabloid darling, who was standing shyly, clutching a book, amid a group of fellow-teachers.

"Someone whispered, 'Does that look like Soon-Yi?' " another eighth grader recalled. "I said, 'That's my sister's teacher!' Then everybody found out."

"My first thought was that maybe the only reason she got hired was because she was famous," said the first eighth grader. "Then I thought, Maybe they only cared that she'd be a good teacher. I felt bad for her, that she'll be rejected at a lot of schools because of who she is."

After another third grader spotted Soon-Yi on E!, the entertainment channel, some gentle teasing began. "Ms. Previn, do you have a boyfriend?" one of the girls asked. "She said, 'Yeah, Tom Cruise. Let's get back to reading.' "

The young ladies returned to the subject after class: "We said, 'That can't be, because Tom Cruise is already married.' "

"Period's over," Previn replied.

Previn's student-teaching semester has just come to a close. "She's going to be a fine teacher," a school official said. "If there was an opening here, I can't imagine that we wouldn't want her as a candidate."

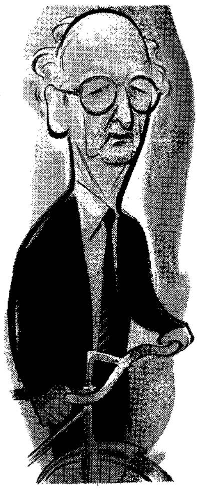
NOTES ON KEMPTON

FOR the past half century, there has been no more reassuring sight in this city than that of Murray Kempton, the greatest newspaper columnist since Mencken, riding his bicycle on a spring afternoon to a scene of municipal disaster. To his colleagues, at least, it was always a sight more inspiring than any tall building, and what helped make it so was that Kempton always seemed thoroughly delighted to be carrying out this routine for whatever undeserving publisher was paying his wage at the time. Reed-thin and dressed in three-piece suits that ranged wildly in color from navy to charcoal, his eyes bright and his lips pursed as if to whistle, Kempton appeared oblivious of traffic—an ethereal effect only heightened in recent years as he took to wearing headphones and a Discman slung like a feedbag around his neck, the better to block out the horns with Johannes Brahms or Coleman Hawkins. Once on the scene (a mobster's indictment, a widow's eviction), Kempton would settle in with the pack, take a few notes, and then pedal back to the office and, not rarely, commit literature. He did this nearly every day of his adult life.

Certain of his colleagues, like Jimmy Breslin, have spawned leagues of imitators, some good, some less so; no one has been foolish enough to imitate Kempton, for that would have required a sensibility so original and a prose style so ornate that the well-intended homage would quickly turn ridiculous. The second saxophone in a high-school marching band could sooner imitate Charlie Parker's "Ko-Ko" than any journalist could imitate Kempton. His means of deflation or praise was through the genius of his sentences, the wry surprise at the end of the syntactic snake. Once, when Billy Graham came to the city on a crusade, Kempton wrote, "Before I say another word about Billy Graham's opening, I should like to say that, if Jesus Christ crucified for our sins was good enough for Johann Sebastian Bach and Fyodor Dostoyevsky and Georges Rouault, He is much too good for the likes of me, and I shall make no sport of any honest prophet of His."

Kempton was probably the most courteous man in New York. After a death-defying cab ride, he would invariably lean toward the partition, pay the fare (with a preposterous tip), and tell the driver, "God bless you." On his seventy-fifth birthday, he received an American flag from the senior senator from New York, a greeting from a cardinal, and a flowering amaryllis from the wife of Carmine (the Snake) Persico.

A sense of surprise was among his greatest gifts. You never knew whom he would determine a loser and, therefore, like. In fact, Kempton had a curious affection for mobsters—or, if not affection, then a complicated point of view about the genus. He made sure his tabloid readers knew that the average hood was no mythic lord but, more likely, a run-of-the-mill homicidal maniac living in a row house in Bay Ridge. Kempton fought in the Philippines as a young man, and in his life as a reporter came across nearly every tragedy imaginable. And so he had a hard time accepting the tabloid notion that mobsters were uniquely evil. "You know, most of these guys, when you meet them, are just as bad as respectable people," he once said. "They take their beatings like men. Except in narcotics. I never met anyone who dealt in narcotics who had even the remotest decency. Do you remember that moment in Henry Adams's 'Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres,' when Adams speaks of the Virgin and Child looking down on a dead faith? Well, John Gotti believed in all of it. He believed in a dead faith."



The hell of it was that so little of the rest of the country, that narrow strip of land west of the Hudson, could know Kempton's work without exerting a great deal of effort. In his long career he wrote mainly for the *Post* (when it was a liberal paper) and *Newsday*, more briefly for the *World-Telegram & Sun* and *The New Republic;* only *The New York Review of Books* gave him the national audience he deserved. It hardly mattered to him. Murray Kempton loved his city nearly as much as it did him. New York, he wrote not so long ago, "happens to be the only city under the eye of God where the librettist for 'Don Giovanni' could find his closest friend in the author of 'The Night Before Christmas.' "

Murray Kempton died last week. He was seventy-nine. ♦

"The Book Party's Over," Malcolm Gladwell; "Empty Seats," David Remnick; "Command Performance," David Hare; "Who's That Girl?," Roy Keenwerth; "Notes on Kempton," David Remnick.

ANNALS OF LAW

SPINNING TIMOTHY McVEIGH

What's a defense attorney to do?

BY JEFFREY TOOBIN

On April 21, 1995, two days after the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building, in Oklahoma City, video cameras outside a rural courthouse sixty miles north of the city taped the "perp walk" of Timothy McVeigh. His eyes were level and cold as he shuffled, wearing a bright-orange prison jumpsuit and manacles, toward a waiting van. Television stations broadcast the brief tape repeatedly, often in accusatory slow motion. When Stephen Jones became McVeigh's lawyer shortly afterward, those pictures of his client prompted the defense attorney to begin a project in image management—an area that would become a cornerstone of the defense in the case for the next two years.

Jones, who is fifty-six years old, runs a successful six-lawyer firm in Enid, Oklahoma, where he has also long dabbled in state politics—and learned the tricks of the veteran political consultant, which he has brought to the defense of McVeigh. "I thought the walkout had been overused," Jones said later, so he invited a handful of reporters to meet with McVeigh in jail, informing them that his client had been instructed not to discuss the facts of the case. These interviews yielded predictably gentle stories about the defendant. *Newsweek* ran a beatific photograph of McVeigh on its cover, along with the headline "The Suspect Speaks." Inside, the magazine reported that McVeigh "seemed a lot more like a typical GenXer than a deranged loner, much less a terrorist." *Time* questioned McVeigh as if he were a Nobel laureate: "Who is Timothy McVeigh? Who are you? What is your philosophy about life? What moves you? What bores you? . . . Who are your favorite authors of political philosophy? . . . Do you miss your family?" Scott Pelley, of CBS, reported, "Over all, McVeigh projects the image of a relaxed young man, friendly, with an easy smile—a stark contrast to the first time the nation saw him."

Evidently buoyed by the success of those ventures, in August of last year Jones went as far as to file in court a "motion for media access," which surely ranks as one of the more peculiar documents ever filed in a major case. Jones sought a court order allowing McVeigh to participate in one videotaped interview with either Barbara Walters, Diane Sawyer, Tom Brokaw, Dan Rather, Susan Candiotti of CNN, or Jack Bowen of Fox. A portion of the legal brief was devoted to

Stephen Jones and Timothy McVeigh:
a two-year project in image management.

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Kyra Nichols, *Pavane*, in New York Harbor. Photo by Richard Corman

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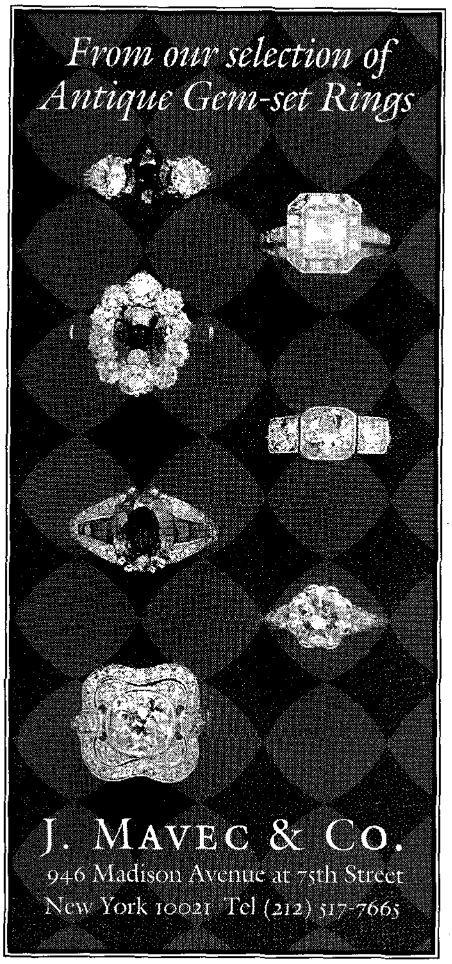

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establishing each of the journalists' qualifications to interview McVeigh. Jones noted, for example, that "Mr. Brokaw's interview with the Communist Party General Secretary and President of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev, received widespread praise." The brief went on to note that if Richard Matsch, the trial judge in the case, granted the motion, McVeigh himself would decide on the journalist to whom he would grant an audience.

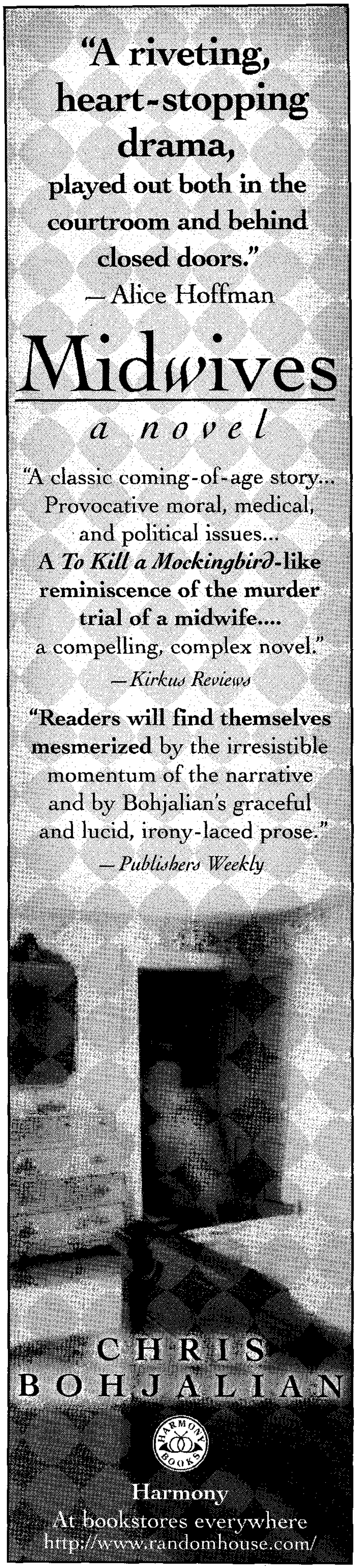
Matsch refused the motion, but Jones has persisted in courting journalists. In fact, over the two years since the bombing Jones has become the most familiar public face in the case, after the defendants. One print reporter recalled with amusement that Jones asked him an unusual question before they sat down for an interview in his office in Enid: Would he mind if a network-television crew videotaped their conversation? The defense has also provided information and tips on a not-for-attribution basis to any number of reporters. On January 8th, for example, the Los Angeles *Times* reported that "federal prosecutors plan to call only six eyewitnesses" who can place McVeigh in the bombing conspiracy. "They have a very circumstantial case," the story quoted a "defense source" as saying. "This case does not justify the hyperbole the government has given it." (The story never explained why six eyewitnesses qualified as a small number.) The performance of the McVeigh defense may represent the apotheosis of a trend that has been building for a long time and holds that a defense attorney's role of public spokesman may be as important as that of courtroom advocate.

But in the tumultuous weeks leading up to the beginning of the McVeigh trial, and in the dramatic first two weeks of testimony, the limitations of Jones's approach have also become evident. While the defense attorney was being photographed kissing his wife in their Denver apartment by the *Rocky Mountain News* and being interviewed with his wife by Tom Brokaw for the NBC Nightly News, the government's case began flawlessly. Prosecutors established that the bomb was contained in a Ryder truck rented to one Robert Kling two days before the tragedy. The defendant's former friend Lori Fortier testified that she had laminated a false driver's license in that name for McVeigh—after he confided to her his detailed plans to bomb the Oklahoma federal building. At the beginning of last week, McVeigh's sister, Jennifer, testified that Timothy had been moving away from political rhetoric and toward direct action as the time of the bombing approached. And on Thursday, the government introduced a letter that McVeigh wrote shortly before the bombing, in which he said that his "whole mindset has shifted from intellectual to animal." Defense cross-examination has had little effect on the credibility of any government witnesses. Moreover, in the court of public opinion, Jones's media strategy has backfired. At times in recent weeks, it has seemed that the more Jones talked in public, the more he hurt his client's case. A handful of successful criminal-defense lawyers have long resisted the trend to become public spokesmen for their clients and, consequently, have sacrificed opportunities to become media celebrities themselves. But the example of Stephen Jones suggests that the old-fashioned notion of trying your case only in the courtroom may have more merit than the defense bar has lately acknowledged.

EVEN before Jones started representing McVeigh, he was probably the most famous person in Enid—a prominent lawyer and Republican who favors the attire of an aging English dandy and who lives with his wife, Sherrel, on the main road into town, in a striking ten-thousand-square-foot house modelled on Mount Vernon. Bookish and socially somewhat ill at ease, Jones often eats lunch alone, reading one of the thirty thousand books in his library.

But Jones raised his profile dramatically last December 22nd, when he took a half-page advertisement in the Sunday Enid *News & Eagle* to announce his departure for Denver and the McVeigh trial. "To this place, Enid, and to the kindness of these people, I owe everything," Jones wrote. "I now leave, not knowing when or whether ever I may return, with a task before me greater than that which has ever rested upon any lawyer." One local reporter recognized that the advertisement had been cribbed from Abraham Lincoln's farewell address to the people of Springfield, Illinois, on February 11, 1861, before he left for Washington to take up the Presidency. Confronted with the similarities, Jones brushed off the issue, pointing out, correctly, "It's not copyrighted."

Plainly, Jones had long chafed at living the life of a small-town lawyer, even a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successful one. In 1964, he took several months off from the University of Oklahoma law school to work as an assistant to Richard Nixon, who was then in private law practice in New York. Before the McVeigh case came along, Jones's primary outlet for his extralegal ambitions had been politics. Oklahoma has become an increasingly Republican state in recent years, and Jones ran for office three times between 1974 and 1980, but he lost each time. Moreover, in 1990, as the Republican nominee against the incumbent senator, David Boren, Jones received just seventeen per cent of the vote, the lowest share for any major-party candidate in an Oklahoma Senate race in the twentieth century.

So when an Oklahoma federal judge asked Jones to represent McVeigh, a few weeks after the bombing, Jones accepted. The definition of a prominent lawyer in this country is a lawyer with famous clients, however notorious they may be. Here was an opportunity for Jones to gain national recognition, and the government would pay the bills. He has accordingly assembled a defense team that includes fourteen lawyers, several investigators, four secretaries, three other support people, and a "project manager." Though the vast majority of criminal-defense lawyers pick their juries without hiring consultants, Jones was assisted in jury selection by two of the nation's best-known experts in the field—Ann Cole, of New York, and Sanford Marks, of Miami. Jones is himself paid at the statutorily authorized rate of a hundred and twenty-five dollars an hour, but published reports have estimated that he may have already spent ten million dollars on McVeigh's defense. Judge Matsch has approved Jones's expenditures, but the court has not released a breakdown of the defense's spending so far.

IN recent years, courts have struggled without much success to define how far defense lawyers can go in serving as public spokesmen for their clients. In 1991, the Supreme Court noted that "an attorney may take reasonable steps to defend a client's reputation," which might include "an attempt to demonstrate in the court of public opinion that the client does not deserve to be tried." The use of such vague terms as "reasonable" has made these restrictions largely unenforceable. Last June, Judge Matsch prohibited the lawyers in the McVeigh case from disclosing anything "if there is a reasonable likelihood that such disclosure will interfere with a fair trial of the pending charges or otherwise prejudice the due administration of justice"—a rule so vague that it amounted to almost no restriction at all. (One week before the trial began, Judge Matsch did issue tighter restrictions.)

Stated rules of law—even strict gag orders—have very little to do with how lawyers conduct themselves in high-profile litigation. In the civil trial of O. J. Simpson, for example, Judge Hiroshi Fujisaki strictly barred all lawyers in the case from revealing any information about it. Yet after the close of court almost every day, lawyers representing both sides retreated to the bar of the Doubletree Hotel, across the street from the Santa Monica courthouse, where the trial took place, and bantered with journalists well into the evening. The rules were clear and known to everyone. No lawyer could be quoted by name, but information could be attributed in a generic way to the plaintiffs or to the defense. The people who knew about the possible violations of Judge Fujisaki's rules were the reporters who were benefitting from the leaks, so no one complained. In practice, most lawyers in high-profile cases are bound only by what they think will help their clients, and themselves.

"Well, what you call an affair I prefer to call an anomaly."

The Ur-text for aggressive media management by defense lawyers is an article by Robert Shapiro, which appeared in *The Champion*, the magazine of the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, or N.A.C.D.L., in the winter of 1993—about a year and a half before Shapiro became one of O. J. Simpson's lawyers. Entitled "Using the Media to Your Advantage," the article argued that "the importance and power of the media cannot be overemphasized." Accordingly, Shapiro recommended that defense lawyers zealously and continuously provide information to reporters which is favorable to their clients. "Relationships can and should be cultivated with all legitimate members of the press," Shapiro wrote. Gerald Lefcourt, a New York lawyer who is the president-elect of the N.A.C.D.L., says the Shapiro approach often has a great deal of merit. "I am totally convinced that judges and jurors are human beings and they are as much affected by the press as anyone," Lefcourt says. "Sometimes you have to fight back."

A small minority of prominent lawyers takes a different approach. Brendan V. Sullivan, Jr., the Washington lawyer who represented Oliver North throughout the congressional and criminal investigations of the Iran-Contra affair, had almost no contact with the reporters who covered the case. (I was a prosecutor in North's criminal trial, and I was later a colleague, in the United States Attorney's office in Brooklyn, of two of the government lawyers who are now involved with the McVeigh case.) Sullivan sees lawyers' overtures to the press as intended more for the benefit of the lawyers themselves than for their clients. "Most lawyers do it as ego

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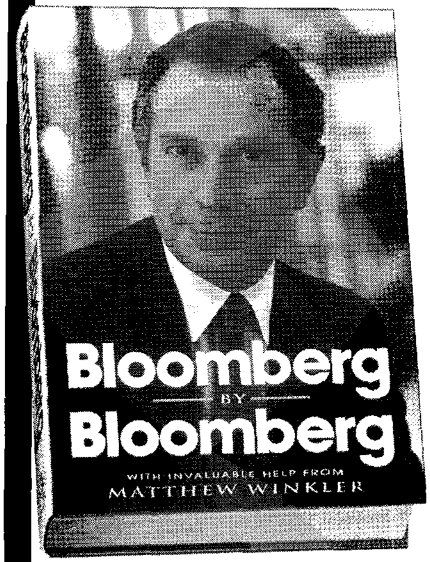

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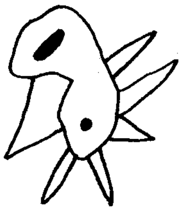
gratification,” he told me recently. “Lawyers like to see their names in the paper, and everyone likes to pontificate. They also think it’s a way to get business. Anyway, I’m already working on the guy’s case seventeen hours a day on the legal and factual issues, and I don’t have time to engage in a conversation with the press.” Sullivan also sees strategic disadvantages in a lawyer’s trying his case in public. “The last thing I want to let anyone know is the way I think about a case,” he said. “Often, one of the best things I have going for me is an element of surprise. I don’t want the prosecutor to know what I’m thinking.”

Above all, though, Sullivan recognizes a delicate problem: sometimes “there’s not much to say. Substantively, there’s a danger that you’re trying to con the press. Where the government does have substantial evidence against your client, it doesn’t do you any good anyway to talk about it in public.” This point is echoed by Jack Litman, a prominent New York lawyer who is best known for having represented Robert Chambers in the “preppy murder” case, and who also generally doesn’t talk to the press. “If you’re in a case and your client did not do anything that’s even questionable—when he’s lily-white innocent—then you’d better level the playing field and talk to the press,” Litman told me recently. “But where your client may have used bad judgment, or behaved inappropriately, even if he’s legally innocent, the only thing you may accomplish by talking to the press is calling attention to these problems.” And when a client is not innocent, of course, the risks for the lawyer—not to mention the client—are all the greater.



This last point speaks directly to the news media’s ultimate priority in covering big cases. Journalists do care about such things as weaknesses in the prosecution’s case, and they will gladly accept leaks on these subjects. But the reporters’ ultimate priority is generally much simpler: Whodunnit? Is the right person charged with the crime? If he is, then providing more information to reporters will only make that conclusion more obvious.

On the morning of Friday, February 28th, Pete Slover, a longtime reporter with the Dallas *Morning News*, received final approval from his editors to publish the most dramatic scoop of the Oklahoma-bombing case. Slover had obtained access to what appeared to be confidential internal defense memoranda written to Jones by a defense investigator named Richard Reyna. In the memos, Reyna reported that McVeigh had confessed to him that he had bombed the Murrah federal building. What was more, the documents said, McVeigh had set off the bomb in the daytime to insure a “body count.” On that Friday, Slover contacted Jones for his comment.

Jones was noncommittal in his first response to Slover, but he did say he expected the matter of the alleged defense documents to be taken up in front of Judge Matsch. Though courts issue prior restraints only very rarely, the management of the *Morning News* decided to take no chances. Shortly after lunch, the paper posted Slover’s story on its Web site. The wire services and the television networks immediately picked it up, and Jones decided to respond to reporters en masse.

There was a snowstorm in Denver on this last day of February, and Jones was pelted with flakes as he spoke outside the courthouse before a nest of microphones broadcasting live to a national television audience. His answer to the story was simple. “I’m happy to say I’m denying everything” that the *Morning News* had reported, Jones told the assembled journalists. “Somebody sold the Brooklyn Bridge to Dallas,” he said, and went on to compare the story to two of the most famous journalistic hoaxes of the century—the phony autobiography of Howard Hughes and the forged Hitler diaries. Asked about McVeigh’s reaction to the report, Jones quoted his client as saying, “There’s a practical joker every week.”

It was a reasonable response, provided that it was true. But according to Jones himself it wasn’t. On the following Monday, March 3rd, Jones called a news conference at a Denver hotel, which was also broadcast live on television. On this occasion, Jones said that he had now learned that Slover had “compromised by fraud, deception, misrepresentation, and theft computer files belonging to the defense.” The *Morning News* had committed a “criminal act,” Jones said, and he was referring the matter to the United States Attorney for appropriate action. (The paper has denied any wrongdoing.) In a lengthy monologue, the lawyer asserted that the *Morning News* had obtained from the defense's computer system "about twenty-five thousand F.B.I. interviews, and memoranda and inserts . . . reports of interviews and other material." Though Jones said that the document containing McVeigh's confession was not a "legitimate defense memorandum," he made it clear that Slover had had access to a great deal of authentic defense material.

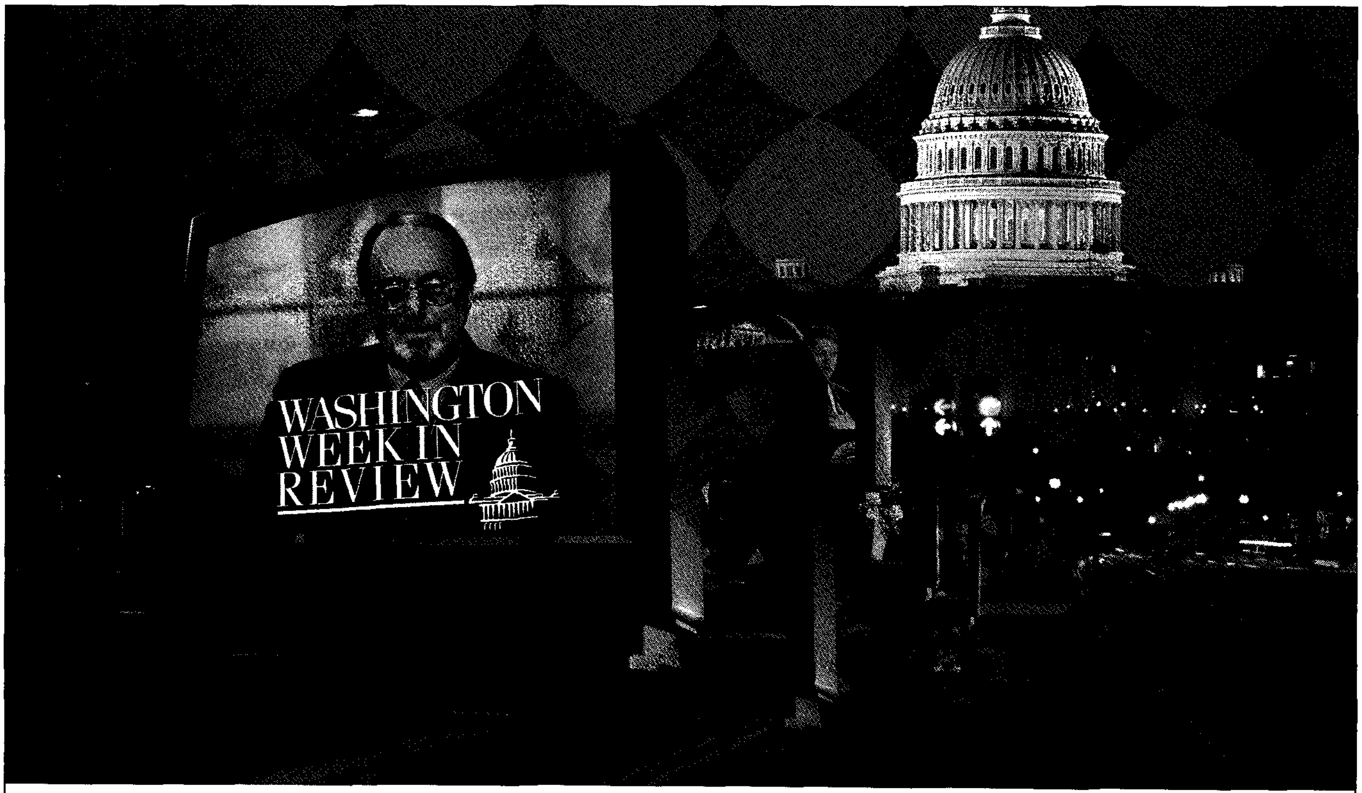
That evening, however, CBS's Scott Pelley reported that "a source familiar with the case has told CBS News that the document is largely fiction"—a statement that amounted to a third explanation of Slover's material. The CBS report said that the confession had been created by the defense in order to persuade a potential witness to change his story. Jones then confirmed that the confession had been fabricated, but claimed that an investigator had done so to convince an individual, whom the defense wanted to interview because they considered him a suspect, that he was not, in fact, under suspicion. This sent reporters scurrying to find Richard Reyna, the investigator who had allegedly taken down McVeigh's confession.

Reyna was happy to talk, and to deny the implication that he had falsified material. Although he did not specifically address the documents that Slover had quoted, he insisted that he had never fabricated any documents in the course of his work on the McVeigh case. Recently, Reyna told me, "Anybody who would do that is crazy. You're going to have to testify at some point. If you testify, they are going to ask you if you lied in your documents. That's insane." After Jones claimed that the confession had been concocted, Reyna quit the defense team. (Jones maintains that he had been dismissed months before.) "The story made it worse for me," Reyna said. "It made it worse for the client, which is the priority here."

Jones's evolving explanations of the Dallas *Morning News* story—from hoax, to theft, to the misleading of a suspect—succeeded only in extending the life of the confession story in the public eye and, more important, in serving to verify Slover's original report. There seemed no avoiding the conclusion that McVeigh had confessed to Reyna. A coup de grâce was delivered to Jones's strategy just a week and a half after the *Morning News* story. On March 11th, *Playboy* posted an article by Ben Fenwick on its Web site which purported to cite additional internal defense documents, containing an even more detailed confession to the bombing by McVeigh. This time, Jones offered no public reaction to the disclosures—a belated recognition of the virtue of silence.

If Jones was chastened by the McVeigh-confession fiasco, he did not show it in the final weeks leading up to the trial. Jones played a central—and successful—role in shaping public perceptions of what became a critical news story about the Oklahoma City case: the report of the Inspector General of the Department of Justice on deficiencies in the F.B.I. laboratory's handling of a number of recent major cases.

Released on April 15th, the five-hundred-and-seventeen-page report by the Inspector General, Michael Bromwich, harshly criticized the lab for what it called "significant instances of testimonial errors, substandard analytical work,



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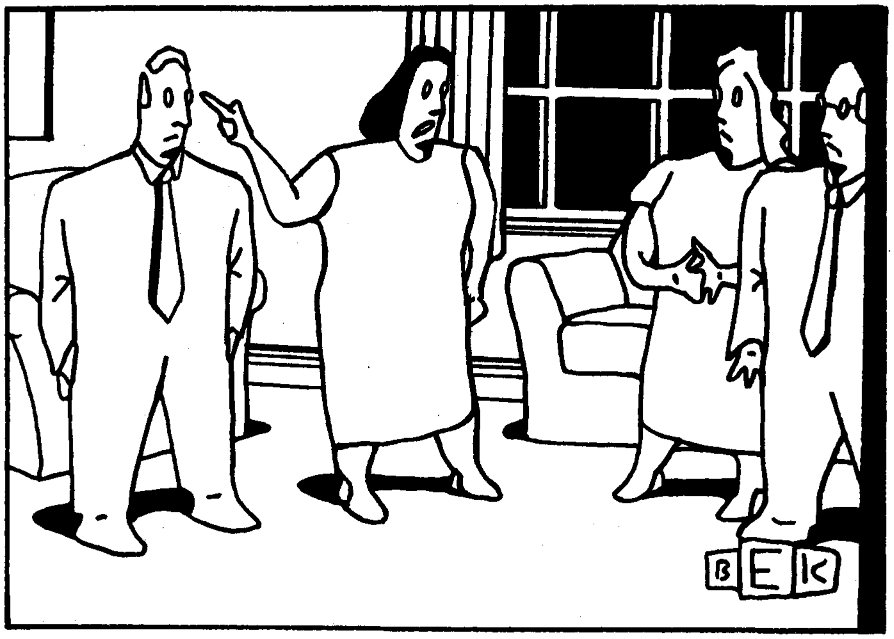

"We keep this section closed off."

and deficient practices." Understandably, given the imminence and the importance of the McVeigh trial, the press focussed on a twenty-seven-page section of the report which concerned the investigation of the Oklahoma City bombing.

On the day of the release, Jones spoke to reporters outside the Denver courthouse. "I think the Inspector General's report, and particularly the conclusions that it draws, indicates the absolute necessity to keep an open mind on the question of Mr. McVeigh's guilt until all the evidence is in," he said. (Judge Matsch issued his tightened gag order on April 16th.) A front-page story in the *Times* of April 17th was typical of the reaction to the Bromwich report. Headlined "A TARNISHED CASE," the story asserted that the report was "the latest in a series of blows sustained by prosecutors," because it "questions the accuracy and integrity of important elements of evidence in the bombing case."

Due in large part to Jones's presentation, the consensus of the news media on the impact of the F.B.I.-lab report was almost total, and almost totally wrong. An examination of the report itself, in the context of certain basic rules of courtroom evidence, shows that it will be of little significance in the case against McVeigh. The section of the Bromwich report devoted to the Oklahoma City bombing case relates primarily to the work of a single F.B.I. agent, David Williams. As an investigator in the explosives section of the lab, Williams reported findings having to do with the kind of explosive used, its weight, and the velocity of its blast. The report asserted that the evidence Williams should have considered did not justify his conclusions. Williams had even, in some circumstances, drawn on information from the subsequent investigation of McVeigh and Nichols (such as that they had allegedly bought four thousand pounds of fertilizer). The report properly excoriated Williams for such deviations from proper scientific method.

But the government long ago decided not to call Williams as a witness, so the jury should never hear either his conclusions or the flaws in them. In a jury trial, it is legally irrelevant that a scientist made errors in a report that is not presented in court. Since the Bromwich report does not suggest that Williams actually handled any evidence, the defense probably cannot argue that he somehow tainted it. So although the report makes a powerful case for Williams's incompetence (or worse) as an agent—and Jones may try to use bits and pieces of it to cross-examine other witnesses—its main conclusions seem legally irrelevant in the case against McVeigh.

The report also criticizes another agent, Roger Martz, who extracted bomb residue from the clothes that McVeigh was wearing at the time of his arrest, for failing to first perform a microscopic examination. But Martz will not be presenting scientific evidence either. Steven Burmeister, an F.B.I. agent whose work was not criticized in the Bromwich report, independently examined McVeigh's clothing and will testify. Linda Jones, a Scotland Yard explosives expert, will present the bulk of the government's scientific evidence. Again, the Bromwich report should have little impact on their testimony.

Jones did succeed in keeping the issue of the F.B.I. errors alive, if only in the public mind, as a looming threat to the prosecution's case. However, as the government's proof has cascaded down on his client in the first two weeks of the trial, Jones's options have dwindled. At times, the lawyer seems even to have lost his bearings in the courtroom. Last week, for example, when cross-examining a Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms employee who was in the federal building at the time of the blast, Jones brought out the fact that two A.T.F. agents who worked there had also participated in the siege of the Branch Davidian compound near Waco, Texas. The government asserts that McVeigh bombed the federal building because he thought it was the home base of the agents in charge of the Waco raid.

Evidence, by and large, still trumps spin. Jones has nevertheless attempted to import into the courtroom the sound-bite philosophy that has characterized McVeigh's defense. In cross-examining Lori Fortier, for example, Jones took evident pride in accomplishing the movie-lawyer feat of reducing the witness to tears. Since Fortier testified that McVeigh had told her of his plans to bomb the federal building, Jones lectured her, "Then you would agree with me, that if your testimony is accurate, all you had to do to prevent the death of these hundred and sixty-eight people was to pick up the telephone."

"Yes," Fortier said quietly.

"And you did not do that, did you?"

"No, I did not."

"And as a result of your failure to pick it up," Jones said with disdain, "a hundred and sixty-eight people died?"

Tears in her eyes, Fortier said only, "Yes."

Jones had won the moment, but at some cost. There's blood on Lori Fortier's hands only if Jones's client is guilty. ♦

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THE SPORTS TABOO

Why blacks are like boys and whites are like girls.

BY MALCOLM GLADWELL

THE education of any athlete begins, in part, with an education in the racial taxonomy of his chosen sport—in the subtle, unwritten rules about what whites are supposed to be good at and what blacks are supposed to be good at. In football, whites play quarterback and blacks play running back; in baseball whites pitch and blacks play the outfield. I grew up in Canada, where my brother Geoffrey and I ran high-school track, and in Canada the rule of running was that anything under the quarter-mile belonged to the West Indians. This didn't mean that white people didn't run the sprints. But the expectation was that they would never win, and, sure enough, they rarely did. There was just a handful of West Indian immigrants in Ontario at that point—clustered in and around Toronto—but they *owned* Canadian sprinting, setting up under the stands at every major championship, cranking up the reggae on their boom boxes, and then humiliating everyone else on the track. My brother and I weren't from Toronto, so we weren't part of that scene. But our West Indian heritage meant that we got to share in the swagger. Geoffrey was a magnificent runner, with powerful legs and a barrel chest, and when he was warming up he used to do that exaggerated, slow-motion jog that the white guys would try to do and never quite pull off. I was a miler, which was a little outside the West Indian range. But, the way I figured it, the rules meant that no one should ever outkick me over the final two hundred metres of any race. And in the golden summer of my fourteenth year, when my running career prematurely peaked, no one ever did.

When I started running, there was a quarter-miler just a few years older than I was by the name of Arnold Stotz. He was a bulldog of a runner, hugely talented, and each year that he moved through the sprinting ranks he invariably broke the existing four-hundred-metre record in his age class. Stotz was white, though, and every time I saw the results of a big track meet I'd keep an eye out for his name, because I was convinced that he could not keep winning. It was as if I saw his whiteness as a degenerative disease, which would eventually claim and cripple him. I never asked him whether he felt the same anxiety, but I can't imagine that he didn't. There was only so long that anyone could defy the rules. One day, at the provincial championships, I looked up at the results board and Stotz was gone.

Talking openly about the racial dimension of sports in this way, of course, is considered unseemly. It's all right to say that blacks dominate sports because they lack opportunities elsewhere. That's the "Hoop Dreams" line, which says whites are allowed to acknowledge black athletic success as long as they feel guilty about it. What you're not supposed to say is what we were saying in my track days—that we were better *because* we were black, because of something intrinsic to being black. Nobody said anything like that publicly last month when Tiger Woods won the Masters or when, a week later, African men claimed thirteen out of the top twenty places in the Boston Marathon. Nor is it likely to come up this month, when African-Americans will make up eighty per cent of the players on the floor for the N.B.A. playoffs. When the popular television sports commentator Jimmy (the Greek) Snyder did break this taboo, in 1988—infamously ruminating on the size and significance of black thighs—one prominent N.A.A.C.P. official said that his remarks "could set race relations back a hundred years." The assumption is that the whole project of trying to get us to treat each other the same will be undermined if we don't all agree that under the skin we actually are the same.

The point of this, presumably, is to put our discussion of sports on a par with legal notions of racial equality, which

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would be a fine idea except that civil-rights law governs matters like housing and employment and the sports taboo covers matters like what can be said about someone's jump shot. In his much heralded new book "Darwin's Athletes," the University of Texas scholar John Hoberman tries to argue that these two things are the same, that it's impossible to speak of black physical superiority without implying intellectual inferiority. But it isn't long before the argument starts to get ridiculous. "The spectacle of black athleticism," he writes, inevitably turns into "a highly public image of black retardation." Oh, really? What, exactly, about Tiger Woods's victory in the Masters resembled "a highly public image of black retardation"? Today's black athletes are multimillion-dollar corporate pitchmen, with talk shows and sneaker deals and publicity machines and almost daily media opportunities to share their thoughts with the world, and it's very hard to see how all this contrives to make them look stupid. Hoberman spends a lot of time trying to inflate the significance of sports, arguing that how we talk about events on the baseball diamond or the track has grave consequences for how we talk about race in general. Here he is, for example, on Jackie Robinson:

> The sheer volume of sentimental and intellectual energy that has been invested in the mythic saga of Jackie Robinson has discouraged further thinking about what his career did and did not accomplish. . . . Black America has paid a high and largely unacknowledged price for the extraordinary prominence given the black athlete rather than other black men of action (such as military pilots and astronauts), who represent modern aptitudes in ways that athletes cannot.

Please. Black America has paid a high and largely unacknowledged price for a long list of things, and having great athletes is far from the top of the list. Sometimes a baseball player is just a baseball player, and sometimes an observation about racial difference is just an observation about racial difference. Few object when medical scientists talk about the significant epidemiological differences between blacks and whites—the fact that blacks have a higher incidence of hypertension than whites and twice as many black males die of diabetes and prostate cancer as white males, that breast tumors appear to grow faster in black women than in white women, that black girls show signs of puberty sooner than white girls. So why aren't we allowed to say that there might be athletically significant differences between blacks and whites?

You're not supposed to say what we said—that we were better because we were black. Photograph by Annie Leibovitz.

According to the medical evidence, African-Americans seem to have, on the average, greater bone mass than do white Americans—a difference that suggests greater muscle mass. Black men have slightly higher circulating levels of testosterone and human-growth hormone than their white counterparts, and blacks over all tend to have proportionally slimmer hips, wider shoulders, and longer legs. In one study, the Swedish physiologist Bengt Saltin compared a group of Kenyan distance runners with a group of Swedish distance runners and found interesting differences in muscle composition: Saltin reported that the Africans appeared to have more blood-carrying capillaries and more mitochondria (the body's cellular power plant) in the fibres of their quadriceps. Another study found that, while black South African distance runners ran at the same speed as white South African runners, they were able to use more oxygen—eighty-nine per cent versus eighty-one per cent—over extended periods: somehow, they were able to exert themselves more. Such evidence suggested that there were physical differences in black athletes which have a bearing on activities like running and jumping, which should hardly come as a surprise to anyone who follows competitive sports.

To use track as an example—since track is probably the purest measure of athletic ability—Africans recorded fifteen out of the twenty fastest times last year in the men's ten-thousand-metre event. In the five thousand metres, eighteen out of the twenty fastest times were recorded by Africans. In the fifteen hundred metres, thirteen out of the twenty fastest times were African, and in the sprints, in the men's hundred metres, you have to go all the way down to the twenty-third place in the world rankings—to Geir Moen, of Norway—before you find a white face. There is a point at which it becomes foolish to deny the fact of black athletic prowess, and even more foolish to banish speculation on the topic. Clearly, something is going on. The question is what.

If we are to decide what to make of the differences between blacks and whites, we first have to decide what to make of the word "difference," which can mean any number of things. A useful case study is to compare the ability of men and women in math. If you give a large, representative sample of male and female students a standardized math test, their mean scores will come out pretty much the same. But if you look at the margins, at the very best and the very worst students, sharp differences emerge. In the math portion of an achievement test conducted by Project Talent—a nationwide survey of fifteen-year-olds—there were 1.3 boys for every girl in the top ten per cent, 1.5 boys for every girl in the top five per cent, and seven boys for every girl in the top one per cent. In the fifty-six-year history of the Putnam Mathematical Competition, which has been described as the Olympics of college math, all but one of the winners have been male. Conversely, if you look at people with the very lowest math ability, you'll find more boys than girls there, too. In other words, although the average math ability of boys and girls is the same, the distribution isn't: there are more males than females at the bottom of the pile, more males than females at the top of the pile, and fewer males than females in the middle. Statisticians refer to this as a difference in variability.

This pattern, as it turns out, is repeated in almost every conceivable area of gender difference. Boys are more variable than girls on the College Board entrance exam and in routine elementary-school spelling tests. Male mortality patterns are more variable than female patterns; that is, many more men die in early and middle age than women, who tend to die in more of a concentrated clump toward the end of life. The problem is that variability differences are regularly confused with average differences. If men had higher average math scores than women, you could say they were better at the subject. But because they are only more variable the word "better" seems inappropriate.

The same holds true for differences between the races. A racist stereotype is the assertion of average difference—it's the claim that the typical white is superior to the typical black. It allows a white man to assume that the black man he passes on the street is stupider than he is. By contrast, if what racists believed was that black intelligence was simply more variable than white intelligence, then it would be impossible for them to construct a stereotype about black intelligence at all. They wouldn't be able to generalize. If they wanted to believe that there were a lot of blacks dumber than whites, they would also have to believe that there were a lot of blacks smarter than they were. This distinction is critical to understanding the relation between race and athletic performance. What are we seeing when we remark black domination of élite sporting events—an average difference between the races or merely a difference in variability?

This question has been explored by geneticists and physical anthropologists, and some of the most notable work has been conducted over the past few years by Kenneth Kidd, at Yale. Kidd and his colleagues have been taking DNA samples from two African Pygmy tribes in Zaire and the Central African Republic and comparing them with DNA samples taken from populations all over the world. What they have been looking for is variants—subtle differences between the DNA of one person and another—and what they have found is fascinating. "I would say, without a doubt, that in almost any single African population—a tribe or however you want to define it—there is more genetic variation than in all the rest of the world put together," Kidd told me. In a sample of fifty Pygmies, for example, you might find nine variants in one stretch of DNA. In a sample of hundreds of people from around the rest of the world, you might find only a total of six variants in that same stretch of DNA—and probably every one of those six variants would also be found in the Pygmies. If everyone in the world was wiped out except Africans, in other words, almost all the human genetic diversity would be preserved.

The likelihood is that these results reflect Africa's status as the homeland of *Homo sapiens:* since every human population outside Africa is essentially a subset of the original African population, it makes sense that everyone in such a population would be a genetic subset of Africans, too. So you can expect groups of Africans to be more variable in respect to almost anything that has a genetic component. If, for example, your genes control how you react to aspirin, you'd expect to see more Africans than whites for whom one aspirin stops a bad headache, more for whom no amount of aspirin works, more who are allergic to aspirin, and more who need to take, say, four aspirin at a time to get any benefit—but far fewer Africans for whom the standard

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THERE OR THEN

At home, at noon, I am located by three *where*
Coördinates and one for *when*, but none
For *late* or *soon*, which seems
Unfair: the realm of here and there
Scorns the immense expanse of now and then
With its symmetrical maps. *Then* future
And, *then* past are both perhaps
Whenever in time present and *now* negates them both
And, like the two-faced mirror of zero that can endow
The integers with negative looks at themselves,
Sits always on the threshold between the dark
Bedroom and its corners of remembrance
And the sunny kitchen where the next things are being whipped
Up. Which is also to say that *Now* lies on a curve
Whose values are the relative timelinesses,
Stretching, before our days and beyond our years,
In its own kind of silence. *Late* and *soon*—
And *ready* perhaps?—would frame a sort of space
In which a palpable *now* might take shape
By taking place, by taking one of an infinite
Number of places: the active *Now!* of our most agitated
Imperatives, and not the usual passive one,
Lying about in the sun by the side of the pool
Glomming the fronts and backs of the occasionals, blond
And bland, as they passed, the *now* and *then*
Moment which, because it can be so readily
Imagined, is so prone to being deferred.
Like the enactment of our resolutions, like—
But only for a limited while—our death.

—JOHN HOLLANDER

two-aspirin dose would work well. And to the extent that running is influenced by genetic factors you would expect to see more really fast blacks—and more really slow blacks—than whites but far fewer Africans of merely average speed. Blacks are like boys. Whites are like girls.

There is nothing particularly scary about this fact, and certainly nothing to warrant the kind of gag order on talk of racial differences which is now in place. What it means is that comparing élite athletes of different races tells you very little about the races themselves. A few years ago, for example, a prominent scientist argued for black athletic supremacy by pointing out that there had never been a white Michael Jordan. True. But, as the Yale anthropologist Jonathan Marks has noted, until recently there was no black Michael Jordan, either. Michael Jordan, like Tiger Woods or Wayne Gretzky or Cal Ripken, is one of the best players in his sport not because he's like the other members of his own ethnic group but precisely because he's not like them—or like anyone else, for that matter. Élite athletes are élite athletes because, in some sense, they are on the fringes of genetic variability. As it happens, African populations seem to create more of these genetic outliers than white populations do, and this is what underpins the claim that blacks are better athletes than whites. But that's all the claim amounts to. It doesn't say anything at all about the rest of us, of all races, muddling around in the genetic middle.

There is a second consideration to keep in mind when we compare blacks and whites. Take the men's hundred-metre final at the Atlanta Olympics. Every runner in that race was of either Western African or Southern African descent, as you would expect if Africans had some genetic affinity for sprinting. But suppose we forget about skin color and look just at country of origin. The eight-man final was made up of two African-Americans, two Africans (one from Namibia and one from Nigeria), a Trinidadian, a Canadian of Jamaican descent, an Englishman of Jamaican descent, and a Jamaican. The race was won by the Jamaican-Canadian, in world-record time, with the Namibian coming in second and the Trinidadian third. The sprint relay—the 4 x 100—was won by a team from Canada, consisting of the Jamaican-Canadian from the final, a Haitian-Canadian, a Trinidadian-Canadian, and another Jamaican-Canadian. Now it appears that African heritage is important as an initial determinant of sprinting ability, but also that the most important advantage of all is some kind of cultural or environmental factor associated with the Caribbean.

Or consider, in a completely different realm, the problem of hypertension. Black Americans have a higher incidence of hypertension than white Americans, even after you control for every conceivable variable, including income, diet, and weight, so it's tempting to conclude that there is something about being of African descent that makes blacks prone to hypertension. But it turns out that although some Caribbean countries have a problem with hypertension, others—Jamaica, St. Kitts, and the Bahamas—don't. It also turns out that people in Liberia and Nigeria—two countries where many New World slaves came from—have similar and perhaps even lower blood-pressure rates than white North Americans, while studies of Zulus, Indians, and whites in Durban, South Africa, showed that urban white males had the highest hypertension rates and urban white females had the lowest. So it's likely that the disease has nothing at all to do with Africanness.

The same is true for the distinctive muscle characteristic observed when Kenyans were compared with Swedes. Saltin, the Swedish physiologist, subsequently found many of the same characteristics in Nordic skiers who train at high altitudes and Nordic runners who train in very hilly regions—conditions, in other words, that resemble the mountainous regions of Kenya's Rift Valley, where so many of the country's distance runners come from. The key factor seems to be Kenya, not genes.

Lots of things that seem to be genetic in origin, then, actually aren't. Similarly, lots of things that we wouldn't normally think might affect athletic ability actually do. Once again, the social-science literature on male and female math achievement is instructive. Psychologists argue that when it comes to subjects like math, boys tend to engage in what's known as ability attribution. A boy who is doing well will attribute his success to the fact that he's good at math, and if he's doing badly he'll blame his teacher or his own lack of motivation—anything but his ability. That makes it easy for him to bounce

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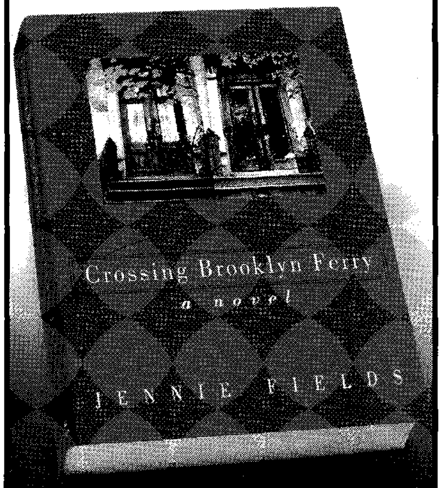

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FROM WILLIAM MORROW

back from failure or disappointment, and gives him a lot of confidence in the face of a tough new challenge. After all, if you think you do well in math because you're good at math, what's stopping you from being good at, say, algebra, or advanced calculus? On the other hand, if you ask a girl why she is doing well in math she will say, more often than not, that she succeeds because she works hard. If she's doing poorly, she'll say she isn't smart enough. This, as should be obvious, is a self-defeating attitude. Psychologists call it "learned helplessness"—the state in which failure is perceived as insurmountable. Girls who engage in effort attribution learn helplessness because in the face of a more difficult task like algebra or advanced calculus they can conceive of no solution. They're convinced that they can't work harder, because they think they're working as hard as they can, and that they can't rely on their intelligence, because they never thought they were that smart to begin with. In fact, one of the fascinating findings of attribution research is that the smarter girls are, the more likely they are to fall into this trap. High achievers are sometimes the most helpless. Here, surely, is part of the explanation for greater math variability among males. The female math whizzes, the ones who should be competing in the top one and two per cent with their male counterparts, are the ones most often paralyzed by a lack of confidence in their own aptitude. They think they belong only in the intellectual middle.

The striking thing about these descriptions of male and female stereotyping in math, though, is how similar they are to black and white stereotyping in athletics—to the unwritten rules holding that blacks achieve through natural ability and whites through effort. Here's how *Sports Illustrated* described, in a recent article, the white basketball player Steve Kerr, who plays alongside Michael Jordan for the Chicago Bulls. According to the magazine, Kerr is a "hard-working overachiever," distinguished by his "work ethic and heady play" and by a shooting style "born of a million practice shots." Bear in mind that Kerr is one of the best shooters in basketball today, and a key player on what is arguably one of the finest basketball teams in history. Bear in mind, too, that there is no evidence that Kerr works any harder than his teammates, least of all Jordan himself, whose work habits are legendary. But you'd never guess that from the article. It concludes, "All over America, whenever quicker, stronger gym rats see Kerr in action, they must wonder, How can that guy be out there instead of me?"

There are real consequences to this stereotyping. As the psychologists Carol Dweck and Barbara Licht write of high-achieving schoolgirls, "[They] may view themselves as so motivated and well disciplined that they cannot entertain the possibility that they did poorly on an academic task because of insufficient effort. Since blaming the teacher would also be out of character, blaming their abilities when they confront difficulty may seem like the most reasonable option." If you substitute the words "white athletes" for "girls" and "coach" for "teacher," I think you have part of the reason that so many white athletes are underrepresented at the highest levels of professional sports. Whites have been saddled with the athletic equivalent of learned helplessness—the idea that it is all but fruitless to try and compete at the highest levels, because they have only effort on their side. The causes of athletic and gender discrimination may be diverse, but its effects are not. Once again, blacks are like boys, and whites are like girls.

"We find the defendant guilty on all charges, Your Honor. On the positive side, we really liked his openness and energy."

WHEN I was in college, I once met an old acquaintance from my high-school running days. Both of us had long since quit track, and we talked about a recurrent fantasy we found we'd both had for getting back into shape. It was that we would go away somewhere remote for a year and do nothing but train, so that when the year was up we might finally know how good we were. Neither of us had any intention of doing this, though, which is why it was a fantasy. In adolescence, athletic excess has a certain appeal—during high school, I happily spent Sunday afternoons running up and down snow-covered sandhills—but with most of us that obsessiveness soon begins to fade. Athletic success depends on having the right genes and on a self-reinforcing belief in one's own ability. But it also depends on a rare form of tunnel vision. To be a great athlete, you have to *care*, and what was obvious to us both was that neither of us cared anymore. This is the last piece of the puzzle about what we mean when we say one group is better at something than another: sometimes different groups care about different things. Of the seven hundred men who play major-league baseball, for example, eighty-six come from either the Dominican Republic or Puerto Rico, even though those two islands have a combined population of only eleven million. But then baseball is something that Dominicans and Puerto

Ricans care about—and you can say the same thing about African-Americans and basketball, West Indians and sprinting, Canadians and hockey, and Russians and chess. Desire is the great intangible in performance, and unlike genes or psychological affect we can't measure it and trace its implications. This is the problem, in the end, with the question of whether blacks are better at sports than whites. It's not that it's offensive, or that it leads to discrimination. It's that, in some sense, it's not a terribly interesting question; "better" promises a tidier explanation than can ever be provided.

I quit competitive running when I was sixteen—just after the summer I had qualified for the Ontario track team in my age class. Late that August, we had travelled to St. John's, Newfoundland, for the Canadian championships. In those days, I was whippet-thin, as milers often are, five feet six and not much more than a hundred pounds, and I could skim along the ground so lightly that I barely needed to catch my breath. I had two white friends on that team, both distance runners, too, and both, improbably, even smaller and lighter than I was. Every morning, the three of us would run through the streets of St. John's, charging up the hills and flying down the other side. One of these friends went on to have a distinguished college running career, the other became a world-class miler; that summer, I myself was the Canadian record holder in the fifteen hundred metres for my age class. We were almost terrifyingly competitive, without a shred of doubt in our ability, and as we raced along we never stopped talking and joking, just to prove how absurdly easy we found running to be. I thought of us all as equals. Then, on the last day of our stay in St. John's, we ran to the bottom of Signal Hill, which is the town's principal geographical landmark—an abrupt outcrop as steep as anything in San Francisco. We stopped at the base, and the two of them turned to me and announced that we were all going to run straight up Signal Hill *backward*. I don't know whether I had more running ability than those two or whether my Africanness gave me any genetic advantage over their whiteness. What I do know is that such questions were irrelevant, because, as I realized, they were willing to go to far greater lengths to develop their talent. They ran up the hill backward. I ran home. ♦

Pierre-Auguste Renoir *Mademoiselle Legrand* (detail), 1875, Philadelphia Museum of Art

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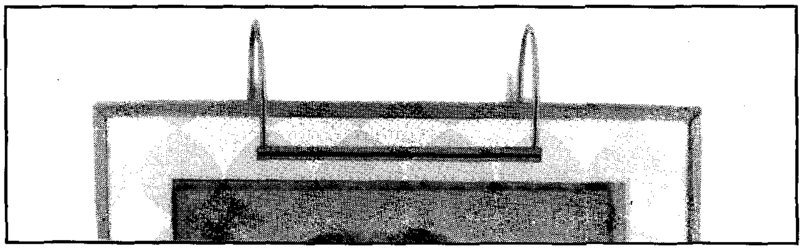

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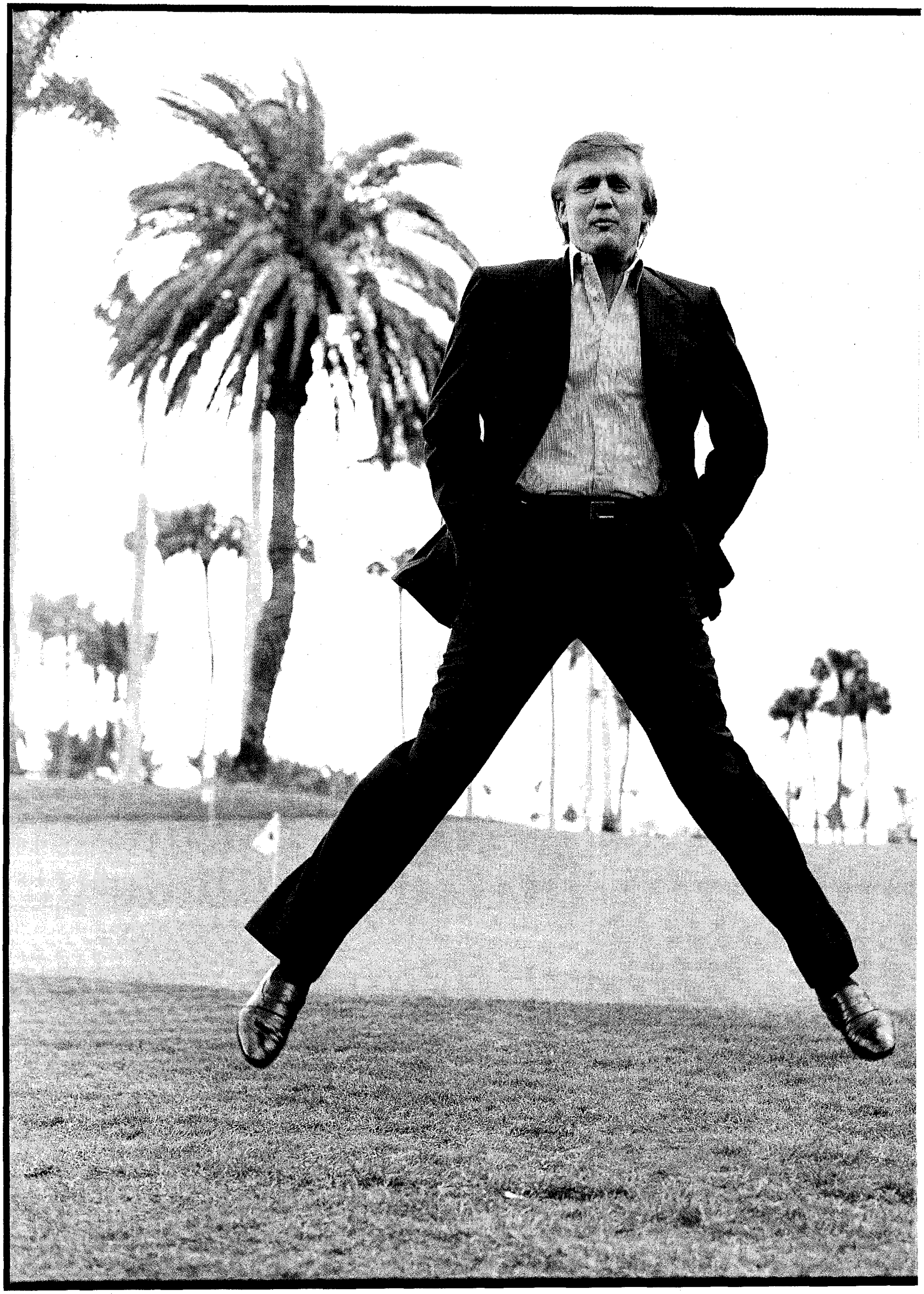


PROFILE

TRUMP SOLO

No wonder he's got no time for Marla.

BY MARK SINGER

ONE morning last week, Donald Trump, who under routine circumstances tolerates publicity no more grudgingly than an infant tolerates a few daily feedings, sat in his office on the twenty-sixth floor of Trump Tower, his mood rather subdued. As could be expected, given the fact that his three-and-a-half-year-old marriage to Marla Maples was ending, paparazzi were staking out the exits of Trump Tower, while all weekend helicopters had been hovering over Mar-a-Lago, his private club in Palm Beach. And what would come of it? "I think the thing I'm worst at is managing the press," he said. "The thing I'm best at is business and conceiving. The press portrays me as a wild flamethrower. In actuality, I think I'm much different from that. I think I'm totally inaccurately portrayed."

So, though he'd agreed to a conversation at this decisive moment, it called for wariness, the usual quota of prefatory "off-the-record"s and then some. He wore a navy-blue suit, white shirt, black-onyx-and-gold links, and a crimson print necktie. Every strand of his interesting hair—its gravity-defying ducktails and dry pompadour, its telltale absence of gray—was where he wanted it to be. He was working his way through his daily gallon of Diet Coke and trying out a few diversionary maneuvers. Yes, it was true, the end of a marriage was a sad thing. Meanwhile, was I aware of what a success he'd had with the Nation's Parade, the Veterans Day celebration he'd been very supportive of back in 1995? Well, here was a little something he wanted to show me, a nice certificate signed by both Joseph Orlando, president, and Harry Feinberg, secretary-treasurer, of the New York chapter of the 4th Armored Division Association, acknowledging Trump's participation as an associate grand marshal. A million four hundred thousand people had turned out for the celebration, he said, handing me some press clippings. "O.K., I see this story says a half million spectators. But, trust me, I heard a million four." Here was another clipping, from the *Times*, just the other day, confirming that rents on Fifth Avenue were the highest in the world. "And who owns more of Fifth Avenue than I do?" Or how about the new building across from the United Nations Secretariat, where he planned a "very luxurious hotel-condominium project, a major project." Who would finance it? "Any one of twenty-five different groups. They all want to finance it."

Months earlier, I'd asked Trump whom he customarily confided in during moments of tribulation. "Nobody," he said. "It's just not my thing"—a reply that didn't surprise me a bit. Salesmen, and Trump is nothing if not a brilliant salesman, specialize in simulated intimacy rather than the real thing. His modus operandi had a sharp focus: fly the flag, never budge from the premise that the universe revolves around you, and, above all, stay in character. The Trump tour de force—his evolution from rough-edged rich kid with Brooklyn and Queens political-clubhouse connections to an international name-brand commodity—remains, unmistakably, the most rewarding accomplishment of his ingenious career. The patented Trump palaver, a gaseous blather of "fantastic"s and "amazing"s and "terrific"s and "incredible"s and various synonyms for "biggest," is an indispensable ingredient of the name brand. In addition to connoting a certain quality of construction, service, and security—perhaps only Trump can explicate the meaningful distinctions between "super luxury" and "super super luxury"—his eponym subliminally suggests that a building *belongs* to him even after it's been sold off as condominiums.

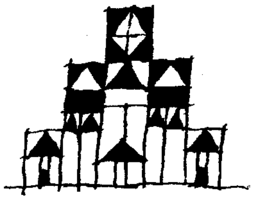
Everywhere inside the Trump Organization headquarters, the walls were

PHOTOGRAPH BY MAX VADUKUL

Donald Trump at Mar-a-Lago.

lined with framed magazine covers, each a shot of Trump or someone who looked an awful lot like him. The profusion of these images—of a man who possessed unusual skills, though not, evidently, a gene for irony—seemed the sum of his appetite for self-reflection. His unique talent—being "Trump" or, as he often referred to himself, "the Trumpster," looming ubiquitous by reducing himself to a persona—exempted him from introspection.

If the gossips hinted that he'd been cuckolded, they had it all wrong; untying the marital knot was based upon straightforward economics. He had a prenuptial agreement, because "if you're a person of wealth you have to have one." In the words of his attorney, Jay Goldberg, the agreement was "as solid as concrete." It would reportedly pay Marla a million dollars, plus some form of child support and alimony, and the time to do a deal was sooner rather than later. A year from now, she would become entitled to a percentage of his net worth. And, as a source *very close* to Trump made plain, "If it goes from a fixed amount to what could be a very enormous amount—even a small percentage of two and a half billion dollars or whatever is a lot of money—we're talking about very huge things. The numbers are much bigger than people understand."



The long-term matrimonial odds had never been terrifically auspicious. What was Marla Maples, after all, but a tabloid cartoon of the Other Woman, an alliteration you could throw the cliché manual at: a leggy, curvaceous blond-bombshell beauty-pageant-winning actress-model-whatever? After a couple of years of deftly choreographed love spats, Donald and Marla produced a love child, whom they could not resist naming Tiffany. A few months before they went legit, Marla told a television interviewer that the contemplation of marriage tended to induce in Donald the occasional "little freak-out" or visit from the "fear monster." Her role, she explained, was "to work with him and help him get over that fear monster." Whenever they travelled, she said, she took along her wedding dress. ("Might as well. You've got to be prepared.") The ceremony, at the Plaza Hotel, right before Christmas, 1993, drew an audience of a thousand but, judging by the heavy turnout of Atlantic City high rollers, one not deemed A-list. The Trump Taj Mahal casino commemorated the occasion by issuing a Donald-and-Marla five-dollar gambling chip.

The last time around, splitting with Ivana, he'd lost the P.R. battle from the git-go. After falling an entire news cycle behind Ivana's spinmeisters, he never managed to catch up. In one ill-advised eruption, he told Liz Smith that his wife reminded him of his bête noire Leona Helmsley, and the columnist chided, "Shame on you, Donald! How dare you say that about the mother of your children?" His only moment of unadulterated, so to speak, gratification occurred when an acquaintance of Marla's blabbed about his swordsmanship. The screamer "BEST SEX I'VE EVER HAD"—an instant classic—is widely regarded as the most libel-proof headline ever published by the *Post*. On the surface, the coincidence of his first marital breakup with the fact that he owed a few billion he couldn't exactly pay back seemed extraordinarily unpropitious. In retrospect, his timing was *excellent*. Ivana had hoped to nullify a postnuptial agreement whose provenance could be traced to Donald's late friend and preceptor the lawyer-fixer and humanitarian Roy Cohn. Though the agreement entitled her to fourteen million dollars plus a forty-six-room house in Connecticut, she and her counsel decided to ask for half of everything Trump owned; extrapolating from Donald's blustery pronouncements over the years, they pegged her share at two and a half billion. In the end, she was forced to settle for the terms stipulated in the agreement because Donald, at that juncture, conveniently appeared to be broke.

Now, of course, according to Trump, things were much different. Business was stronger than ever. And, of course, he wanted to be fair to Marla. Only a million bucks? Hey, a deal was a deal. He meant "fair" in a larger sense: "I think it's very unfair to Marla, or, for that matter, anyone—while there are many positive things, like life style, which is at the highest level— I think it's unfair to Marla always to be subjected to somebody who enjoys his business and does it at a very high level and does it on a big scale. There are lots of compensating balances. You live in the Mar-a-Lagos of the world, you live in the best apartment. But, I think you understand, I don't have very much time. I just don't have very much time. There's nothing I can do about what I do other than stopping. And I just don't want to stop."

A SECURITIES analyst who has studied Trump's peregrinations for many years believes, "Deep down, he wants to be Madonna." In other words, to ask how the gods could have permitted Trump's resurrection is to mistake profound superficiality for profundity, performance art for serious drama. A prime example of superficiality at its most rewarding: the Trump International Hotel & Tower, a fifty-two-story hotel-condominium conversion of the former Gulf & Western Building, on Columbus Circle, which opened last January. The Trump name on the skyscraper belies the fact that his ownership is limited to his penthouse apartment and a stake in the hotel's restaurant and garage, which he received as part of his development fee. During the grand-opening ceremonies, however, such details seemed not to matter as he gave this assessment: "One of the great buildings anywhere in New York, anywhere in the world."

The festivities that day included a feng-shui ritual in the lobby, a gesture of respect to the building's high proportion of Asian buyers, who regard a Trump property as a good place to sink flight capital. An efficient schmoozer, Trump worked the room quickly—a backslap and a wink, a finger on the lapels, no more than a minute with anyone who wasn't a police commissioner, a district attorney, or a mayoral candidate—and then he was ready to go. His executive assistant, Norma Foerderer, and two other Trump Organization executives were waiting in a car to return to the office. Before it pulled away, he experienced a tug of noblesse oblige. "Hold on, just lemme say hello to these Kinney guys," he said, jumping out to greet a group of parking attendants. "Good job, fellas. You're gonna be working here for years to come." It was a quintessential Trumpian gesture, of the sort that explains his popularity among people who barely dare to dream of living in one of his creations.

Back at the office, a *Times* reporter, Michael Gordon, was on the line, calling from Moscow. Gordon had just interviewed a Russian artist named Zurab Tsereteli, a man with a sense of grandiosity familiar to Trump. Was it true, Gordon asked, that Tsereteli and Trump had discussed erecting on the Hudson River a statue of Christopher Columbus that was six feet taller than the Statue of Liberty?

"Yes, it's already been made, from what I understand," said Trump, who had met Tsereteli a couple of months earlier, in Moscow. "It's got forty million dollars' worth of bronze in it, and Zurab would like it to be at my West Side Yards development"—a seventy-five-acre tract called Riverside South—"and we are working toward that end."

According to Trump, the head had arrived in America, the rest of the body was still in Moscow, and the whole thing was being donated by the Russian government. "The mayor of Moscow has written a letter to Rudy Giuliani stating that they would like to make a gift of this great work by Zurab. It would be my honor if we could work it out with the City of New York. I am absolutely favorably disposed toward it. Zurab is a very unusual guy. This man is major and legit."

Trump hung up and said to me, "See what I do? All this bullshit. Know what? After shaking five thousand hands, I think I'll go wash mine."

Norma Foerderer, however, had some pressing business. A lecture agency in Canada was offering Trump a chance to give three speeches over three consecutive days, for seventy-five thousand dollars a pop. "Plus," she said, "they provide a private jet, secretarial services, and a weekend at a ski resort."

How did Trump feel about it?

"My attitude is if somebody's willing to pay me two hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars to make a speech, it seems stupid not to show up. You know why I'll do it? Because I don't think anyone's ever been paid that much."

Would it be fresh material?

"It'll be fresh to them."

Next item: Norma had drafted a letter to Mar-a-Lago members, inviting them to a dinner featuring a speech by George Pataki and entertainment by Marvin Hamlisch. "Oh, and speaking of the Governor, I just got a call. They're shooting a new 'I Love New York' video and they'd like Libby Pataki to go up and down our escalator. I said fine."

A Mar-a-Lago entertainment booker named Jim Grau called about a Carly Simon concert. Trump switched on his speakerphone: "Is she gonna do it?"

"Well, two things have to be done, Donald. No. 1, she'd like to hear from you. And, No. 2, she'd like to turn it in some degree into a benefit for Christopher Reeve."

"That's not a bad idea," said Trump. "Is Christopher Reeve gonna come? He can come down on my plane. So what do I have to do, call her?"

"I want to tell you how we got Carly on this because some of your friends are involved."

"Jim, I don't give a shit. Who the hell cares?"

"Please, Donald. Remember when you had your yacht up there? You had Rose Styron aboard. And her husband wrote 'Sophie's Choice.' And it's through her good offices—"

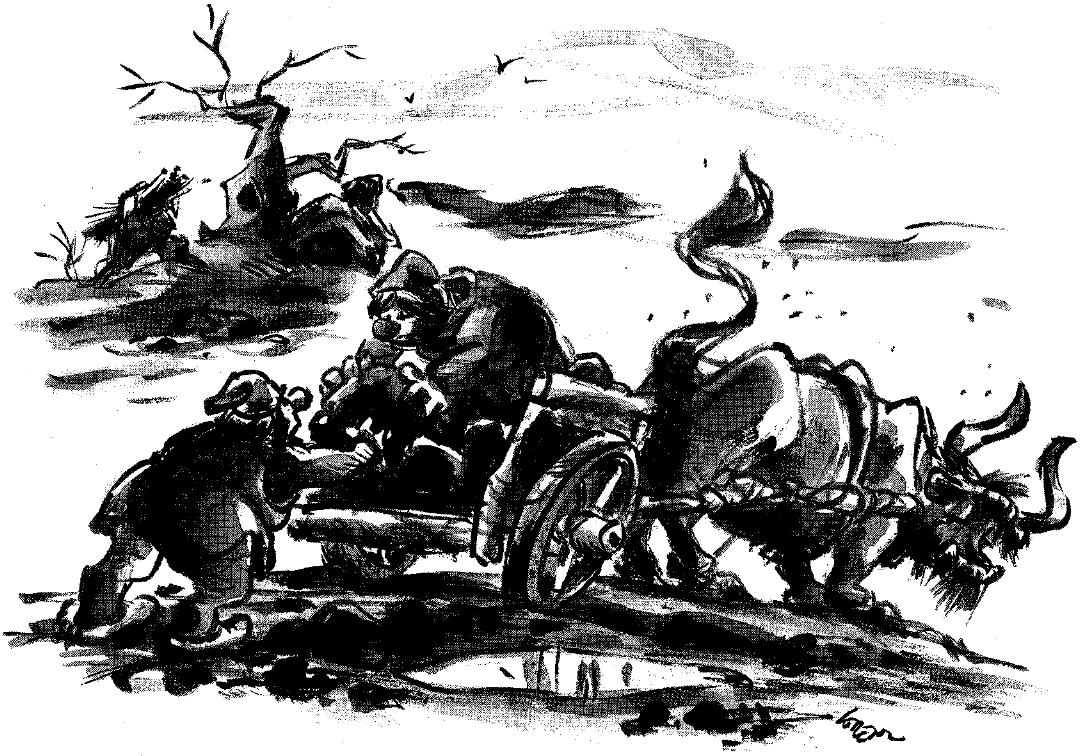
"O.K. Good. So thank 'em and maybe invite 'em."

Click.

"Part of my problem," Trump said to me, "is that I have to do a lot of things myself. It takes so much time. Julio Iglesias is coming to Mar-a-Lago, but I have to *call* Julio, I have to have *lunch* with Julio. I have Pavarotti coming. Pavarotti doesn't perform for anybody. He's the highest-paid performer in the world. A million dollars a performance. The hardest guy to get. If I call him, he'll do it—for a *huge* amount less. Why? Because they like me, they respect me, I don't know."

DURING Trump's ascendancy, in the nineteen-eighties, the essence of his performance art—an opera-buffa parody of wealth—accounted for his populist appeal as well as for the opprobrium of those who regard with distaste the spectacle of an unbridled id. Delineating his commercial aesthetic, he once told an interviewer, "I have glitzy casinos because people expect it. . . . Glitz works in Atlantic City. . . . And in my residential buildings I sometimes use flash, which is a level below glitz." His first monument to himself, Trump Tower, on Fifth Avenue at Fifty-sixth Street, which opened its doors in 1984, possessed many genuinely impressive elements—a sixty-eight-story sawtoothed silhouette, a salmon-colored Italian-marble atrium equipped with an eighty-foot waterfall—and became an instant tourist attraction. In Atlantic City, the idea was to slather on as much ornamentation as possible, the goal being (a) to titillate with the fantasy that a Trump-like life was a lifelike life and (b) to distract from the fact that he'd lured you inside to pick your pocket.

At times, neither glitz nor flash could disguise financial reality. A story in the *Times* three months ago contained a reference to his past "brush with bankruptcy," and Trump, though gratified that



"I hear we've just been granted most-favored-nation status."

the *Times* gave him play on the front page, took umbrage at that phrase. He "never went bankrupt," he wrote in a letter to the editor, nor did he "ever, at any time, come close." Having triumphed over adversity, Trump assumes the prerogative to write history.

In fact, by 1990, he was not only at risk, he was, by any rational standard, hugely in the red. Excessively friendly bankers infected with the promiscuous optimism that made the eighties so memorable and so forgettable had financed Trump's acquisitive impulses to the tune of three billion seven hundred and fifty million dollars. The personally guaranteed portion—almost a billion—represented the value of Trump's good will, putative creditworthiness, and capacity for shame. A debt restructuring began in the spring of 1990 and continued for several years. In the process, six hundred or seven hundred or perhaps eight hundred million of his creditors' dollars vaporized and drifted wherever lost money goes. In America, there is no such thing as a debtors' prison, nor is there a tidy moral to this story.

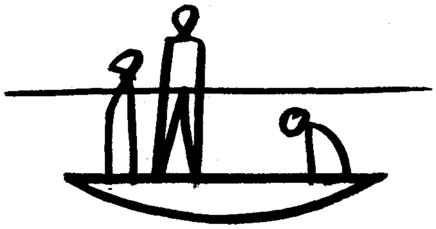
Several of Trump's trophies—the Plaza Hotel and all three Atlantic City casinos—were subjected to "prepackaged bankruptcy," an efficiency maneuver that is less costly than the full-blown thing. Because the New Jersey Casino Control Act requires "financial stability" for a gaming license, it seems hard to avoid the inference that Trump's Atlantic City holdings were in serious jeopardy. Nevertheless, "blip" is the alternative "b" word he prefers, as in "So the market, as you know, turns lousy and I have this blip."

Trump began plotting his comeback before the rest of the world—or, perhaps, even he—fully grasped the direness of his situation. In April of 1990, he announced to the *Wall Street Journal* a plan to sell certain assets and become the "king of cash," a stratagem that would supposedly set the stage for a shrewd campaign of bargain hunting. That same month, he drew down the final twenty-five million dollars of an unsecured hundred-million-dollar personal line of credit from Bankers Trust. Within seven weeks, he failed to deliver a forty-three-million-dollar payment due to bondholders of the Trump Castle Casino, and he also missed a thirty-million-dollar interest payment to one of the estimated hundred and fifty banks that were concerned about his well-being. An army of bankruptcy lawyers began camping out in various boardrooms.

Making the blip go away entailed, among other sacrifices, forfeiting management control of the Plaza and handing over the titles to the Trump Shuttle (the old Eastern Airlines Boston–New York–Washington route) and a twin-towered thirty-two-story condominium building near West Palm Beach, Florida. He also said goodbye to his two-hundred-and-eighty-two-foot yacht, the Trump Princess, and to his Boeing 727. Appraisers inventoried the contents of his Trump Tower homestead. Liens were attached to just about everything but his Brioni suits. Perhaps the ultimate indignity was having to agree to a personal spending cap of four hundred and fifty thousand dollars a month.

It would have been tactically wise, to say nothing of tactful, if, as Trump's creditors wrote off large chunks of their portfolios, he could have curbed his breathtaking propensity for self-aggrandizement. The bravado diminished somewhat for a couple of years—largely because the press stopped paying attention—but by 1993 he was proclaiming, "This year has been the most successful year I've had in business." Every year since, he's issued the same news flash. A spate of Trump-comeback articles appeared in 1996, including several timed to coincide with his fiftieth birthday.

Then, last October, Trump came into possession of what a normal person would regard as real money. For a hundred and forty-two million dollars, he sold his half interest in the Grand Hyatt Hotel, on Forty-second Street, to the Pritzker family, of Chicago, his longtime, and long-estranged, partners in the property. Most of the proceeds weren't his to keep, but he walked away with more than twenty-five million dollars. The chief significance of the Grand Hyatt sale was that it enabled Trump to extinguish the remnants of his once monstrous personally guaranteed debt. When *Forbes* published its annual list of the four hundred richest Americans, he sneaked on (three hundred and seventy-third position) with an estimated net worth of four hundred and fifty million. Trump, meanwhile, had compiled his own unaudited appraisal, one he was willing to share along with the amusing caveat "I've never shown this to a reporter before." According to his calculations, he was actually worth two and a quarter billion dollars—*Forbes* had lowballed him by eighty per cent. Still, he had officially rejoined the plutocracy, his first appearance since the blip.



Jay Goldberg, who in addition to handling Trump's matrimonial legal matters also represented him in the Grand Hyatt deal, told me that, after it closed, his client confessed that the novelty of being unencumbered had him lying awake nights. When I asked Trump about this, he said, "Leverage is an amazing phenomenon. I love leverage. Plus, I've never been a huge sleeper." Trump doesn't drink or smoke, claims he's never even had a cup of coffee. He functions, evidently, according to inverse logic and metabolism. What most people would find unpleasantly stimulating—owing vastly more than you should to lenders who, figuratively, at least, can carve you into small pieces—somehow engenders in him a soothing narcotic effect. That, in any event, is the impression Trump seeks to convey, though the point is now moot. Bankers, typically not the most perspicacious species on earth, from time to time get religion, and there aren't many who will soon be lining up to thrust fresh bazillions at him.

When I met with Trump for the first time, several months ago, he set out to acquaint me with facts that, to his consternation, had remained stubbornly hidden from the public. Several times, he uttered the phrase "off the record, but you can use it." I understood the implication—I was his tool—but failed to see the purpose. "If you have me saying these things, even though they're true, I sound like a schmuck," he explained. How to account, then, for the bombast of the previous two decades? Alair Townsend, a former deputy mayor in the Koch administration, once quipped, "I wouldn't believe Donald Trump if his tongue were notarized." In time, this bon mot became misattributed to Leona Helmsley, who was only too happy to claim authorship. Last fall, after Evander Holyfield upset Mike Tyson in a heavyweight title fight, Trump snookered the *News* into reporting that he'd collected twenty million bucks by betting a million on the underdog. This prompted the *Post* to make calls to some Las Vegas bookies, who confirmed—shockingly!—that nobody had

"Marissa, have we a lovely parting gift for Mr. Griswold?"

been handling that kind of action or laying odds close to 20–1. Trump never blinked, just moved on to the next bright idea.

"I don't think people know how big my business is," Trump told me. "Somehow, they know Trump the celebrity. But I'm the biggest developer in New York. And I'm the biggest there is in the casino business. And that's pretty good to be the biggest in both. So that's a lot of stuff." He talked about 40 Wall Street—"truly one of the most beautiful buildings in New York"—a seventy-two-story landmark that he was renovating. He said he owned the new Niketown store, tucked under Trump Tower; there was a deal to convert the Mayfair Hotel, at Sixty-fifth and Park, into "super-super-luxury apartments . . . but that's like a small one." He owned the land under the Ritz-Carlton, on Central Park South. ("That's a little thing. Nobody knows that I own that. In that way, I'm not really understood.") With CBS, he now owned the Miss U.S.A., Miss Teen U.S.A., and Miss Universe beauty pageants. He pointed to a stack of papers on his desk, closing documents for the Trump International Hotel & Tower. "Look at these contracts. I get these to sign every day. I've signed hundreds of these. Here's a contract for two-point-two million dollars. It's a building that isn't even opened yet. It's eighty-three per cent sold, and nobody even knows it's there. For each contract, I need to sign twenty-two times, and if you think that's easy . . . You know, all the buyers want my signature. I had someone else who works for me signing, and at the closings the buyers got angry. I told myself, 'You know, these people are paying a million eight, a million seven, two million nine, four million one—for those kinds of numbers, I'll sign the fucking contract.' I understand. Fuck it. It's just more work."

As a real-estate impresario, Trump certainly has no peer. His assertion that he is the biggest real-estate *developer* in New York, however, presumes an elastic definition of that term. Several active developers—among them the Rudins, the Roses, the Milsteins—have added more residential and commercial space to the Manhattan market and have historically held on to what they built. When the outer boroughs figure in the tally—and if Donald isn't allowed to claim credit for the middle-income high-rise rental projects that generated the fortune amassed by his ninety-one-year-old father, Fred—he slips further in the rankings. But if one's standard of comparison is simply the number of buildings that bear the developer's name, Donald dominates the field. Trump's vaunted art of the deal has given way to the art of "image ownership." By appearing to exert control over assets that aren't necessarily his—at least not in ways that his pronouncements suggest—he exercises his real talent: using his name as a form of leverage. "It's German in derivation," he has said. "Nobody really knows where it came from. It's very unusual, but it just is a good name to have."

In the Trump International Hotel & Tower makeover, his role is, in effect, that of broker-promoter rather than risktaker. In 1993, the General Electric Pension Trust, which took over the building in a foreclosure, hired the Galbreath Company, an international real-estate management firm, to recommend how to salvage its mortgage on a nearly empty skyscraper that had an annoying tendency to sway in the wind. Along came Trump, proposing a three-way joint venture. G.E. would put up all the money—two hundred and seventy-five million dollars—and Trump and Galbreath would provide expertise. The market timing proved remarkably favorable. When Trump totted up the profits and calculated that his share came to more than forty million bucks, self-restraint eluded him, and he took out advertisements announcing "The Most Successful Condominium Tower Ever Built in the United States."

A minor specimen of his image ownership is his ballyhooed "half interest" in the Empire State Building, which he acquired in 1994. Trump's initial investment—not a dime—matches his apparent return thus far. His partners, the illegitimate daughter and disreputable son-in-law of an even more disreputable Japanese billionaire named Hideki Yokoi, seem to have paid forty million dollars for the building, though their title, even on a sunny day, is somewhat clouded. Under the terms of leases executed in 1961, the building is operated by a partnership controlled by Peter Malkin and the estate of the late Harry Helmsley. The lessees receive almost ninety million dollars a year from the building's tenants but are required to pay the lessors (Trump's partners) only about a million nine hundred thousand. Trump himself doesn't share in these proceeds, and the leases don't expire until 2076. Only if he can devise a way to break the leases will his "ownership" acquire any value. His strategy—suing the Malkin-Helmsley group for a hundred million dollars, alleging, among other things, that they've violated the leases by allowing the building to become a "rodent infested" commercial slum—has proved fruitless. In February, when an armed madman on the eighty-sixth-floor observation deck killed a sightseer and wounded six others before shooting himself, it seemed a foregone conclusion that Trump, ever vigilant, would exploit the tragedy, and he did not disappoint. "Leona Helmsley should be ashamed of herself," he told the *Post*.

One day, when I was in Trump's office, he took a phone call from an investment banker, an opaque conversation that, after he hung up, I asked him to elucidate.

"Whatever complicates the world more I do," he said.

Come again?

"It's always good to do things nice and complicated so that nobody can figure it out."

Case in point: The widely held perception is that Trump is the sole visionary and master builder of Riverside South, the mega-development planned for the former Penn Central Yards, on the West Side. Trump began pawing at the property in 1974, obtained a formal option in 1977, allowed it to lapse in 1979, and reëntered the picture in 1984, when Chase Manhattan lent him eighty-four million dollars for land-purchase and development expenses. In the years that followed, he trotted out several elephantine proposals, diverse and invariably overly dense residential and commercial mixtures. "Zoning for me is a life process," Trump told me. "Zoning is something I have done and ultimately always get because people appreciate what I'm asking for and they know it's going to be the highest quality." In fact, the consensus among the West Side neighbors who studied Trump's designs was that they did not appreciate what he was asking for. An exotically banal hundred-and-fifty-story phallus—"The World's Tallest Building"—provided the centerpiece of his most vilified scheme.

The oddest passage in this byzantine history began in the late eighties, when an assortment of high-minded civic groups united to oppose Trump, enlisted their own architects, and drafted a greatly scaled-back alternative plan. The civic groups hoped to persuade Chase Manhattan, which held Trump's mortgage, to help them entice a developer who could wrest the property from their nemesis. To their dismay, and sheepish amazement, they discovered that one developer was willing to pursue their design: Trump. Over time, the so-called "civic alternative" has become, in the public mind, thanks to Trump's drumbeating, *his* proposal; he has appropriated conceptual ownership.

Three years ago, a syndicate of Asian investors, led by Henry Cheng, of Hong Kong's New World Development Company, assumed the task of arranging construction financing. This transaction altered Trump's involvement to a glorified form of sweat equity; for a fee paid by the investment syndicate, Trump Organization staff people would collaborate with a team from New World, monitoring the construction already under way and working on designs, zoning, and planning for the phases to come. Only when New World has recovered its investment, plus interest, will Trump begin to see any real profit—twenty-five years, at least, after he first cast his covetous eye at the Penn Central rail yards. According to Trump's unaudited net-worth statement, which identifies Riverside South as "Trump Boulevard," he "owns 30-50% of the project, depending on performance." This "ownership," however, is a potential profit share rather than actual equity. Six hundred million dollars is the value Trump imputes to this highly provisional asset.

OF course, the "comeback" Trump is much the same as the Trump of the eighties; there is no "new" Trump, just as there was never a "new" Nixon. Rather, all along there have been several Trumps: the hyperbole addict who prevaricates for fun and profit; the knowledgeable builder whose associates profess awe at his attention to detail; the narcissist whose self-absorption doesn't account for his dead-on ability to exploit other people's weaknesses; the perpetual seventeen-year-old who lives in a zero-sum world of winners and "total losers," loyal friends and "complete scumbags"; the insatiable publicity hound who courts the press on a daily basis and, when he doesn't like what he reads, attacks the messengers as "human garbage"; the chairman and largest stockholder of a billion-dollar public corporation who seems unable to resist heralding overly optimistic earnings projections, which then fail to materialize, thereby eroding the value of his investment—in sum, a fellow both slippery and naïve, artfully calculating and recklessly heedless of consequences.

Trump's most caustic detractors in New York real-estate circles disparage him as "a casino operator in New Jersey," as if to say, "He's not really even one of

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ARTIST'S EASEL

PAINT IT BLACK

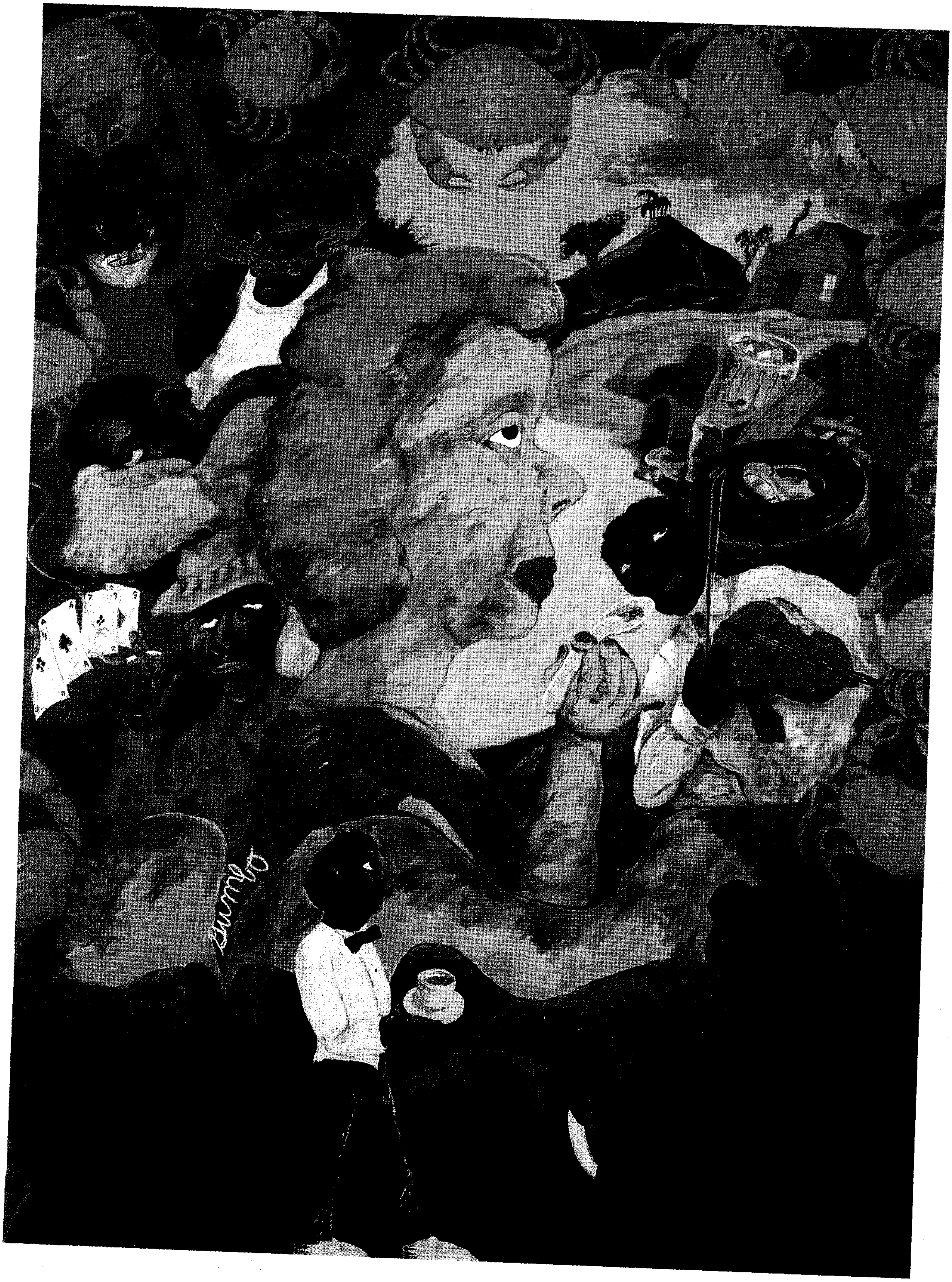
IN this corner, representing the United States of America at the forty-seventh Venice Biennale, weighing in with nineteen honest-to-God paintings on canvas, stands Robert Colescott. What a surprise! The last *painter* to uphold our nation's aesthetic honor at this venerable international art show was Jasper Johns, in 1988. Colescott, moreover, is the first black artist ever chosen for a one-person exhibition at the United States pavilion in Venice, and his big, colorful, slyly wicked allegories should stir up a lot of tortured Eurothink.

The painter, who is seventy-one, first showed his hilariously scathing parodies on racial themes in New York in the seventies. "Eat Dem Taters" was van Gogh's "The Potato Eaters" done in blackface, with stereotypically happy darkies instead of glum Dutch coal miners. "Shirley Temple Black and Bill Robinson White" was just that—the world's favorite tot as a pickaninny (in keeping with her eventual married name), and her tap-dancing friend now white and looking somewhat less than kindly and obsequious.

The paintings that Colescott is showing in Venice are all from the last ten years, after he moved on from savage parody to a more complex and multilayered narrative style. In one way or another, though, most of them chart the absurdity of racial stereotypes. Note the puzzled, slightly distressed expression of the white lady in "A Taste of Gumbo," at the right. She's not quite sure about that redolent spoonful, and she doesn't have a clue to its possible ingredients, which include poverty, garbage, jazz, sex, slavery, and dancing crab demons, all breathed into existence by a slumberous earth mammy. There's something here to offend everyone, but there's also real painting—a fluent interaction of form and color which derives, through many permutations, from Fernand Léger, with whom Colescott once studied, and from Pablo Picasso, the artist he thinks about most often these days. "I've been a robber," Colescott told me recently. "I've taken work that belonged to somebody else and made it my own—forced it to say what I wanted it to say."

—CALVIN TOMKINS

COURTESY THE PHYLLIS KIND GALLERY


Gumbo

us." Such derision is rooted in resentment that his rescue from oblivion—his strategy for remaining the marketable real-estate commodity "Trump"—hinged upon his ability to pump cash out of Atlantic City. The Trump image is nowhere more concentrated than in Atlantic City, and it is there, of late, that the Trump alchemy—transforming other people's money into his own wealth—has been most strenuously tested.

To bail himself out with the banks, Trump converted his casinos to public ownership, despite the fact that the constraints inherent in answering to shareholders do not come to him naturally. Inside the Trump Organization, for instance, there is talk of "the Donald factor," the three to five dollars per share that Wall Street presumably discounts Trump Hotels & Casino Resorts by allowing for his braggadocio and unpredictability. The initial public offering, in June, 1995, raised a hundred and forty million dollars, at fourteen dollars a share. Less than a year later, a secondary offering, at thirty-one dollars per share, brought in an additional three hundred and eighty million dollars. Trump's personal stake in the company now stands at close to forty per cent. As chairman, Donald had an excellent year in 1996, drawing a million-dollar salary, another million for miscellaneous "services," and a bonus of five million. As a shareholder, however, he did considerably less well. A year ago, the stock traded at thirty-five dollars; it now sells for around ten.

Notwithstanding Trump's insistence that things have never been better, Trump Hotels & Casino Resorts has to cope with several thorny liabilities, starting with a junk-bond debt load of a billion seven hundred million dollars. In 1996, the company's losses amounted to three dollars and twenty-seven cents per share—attributable, in part, to extraordinary expenses but also to the fact that the Atlantic City gaming industry has all but stopped growing. And, most glaringly, there was the burden of the Trump Castle, which experienced a ten-per-cent revenue decline, the worst of any casino in Atlantic City.

Last October, the Castle, a heavily leveraged consistent money loser that had been wholly owned by Trump, was bought into Trump Hotels, a transaction that gave him five million eight hundred and thirty-seven thousand shares of stock. Within two weeks—helped along by a reduced earnings estimate from a leading analyst—the stock price, which had been eroding since the spring, began to slide more precipitously, triggering a shareholder lawsuit that accused Trump of self-dealing and a "gross breach of his fiduciary duties." At which point he began looking for a partner. The deal Trump came up with called for Colony Capital, a sharp real-estate outfit from Los Angeles, to buy fifty-one per cent of the Castle for a price that seemed to vindicate the terms under which he'd unloaded it on the public company. Closer inspection revealed, however, that Colony's capital injection would give it high-yield preferred, rather than common, stock—in other words, less an investment than a loan. Trump-l'oeil: Instead of trying to persuade the world that he owned something that wasn't his, he was trying to convey the impression that he would part with an onerous asset that, as a practical matter, he would still be stuck with. In any event, in March the entire deal fell apart. Trump, in character, claimed that he, not Colony, had called it off.

THE END IS NEAR.
YOU WISH.

The short-term attempt to solve the Castle's problems is a four-million-dollar cosmetic overhaul. This so-called "re-theming" will culminate in June, when the casino acquires a new name: Trump Marina. One day this winter, I accompanied Trump when he buzzed into Atlantic City for a re-theming meeting with Nicholas Ribis, the president and chief executive officer of Trump Hotels, and several Castle executives. The discussion ranged from the size of the lettering on the outside of the building to the sparkling gray granite in the lobby to potential future renderings, including a version with an as yet unbuilt hotel tower and a permanently docked yacht to be called Miss Universe. Why the boat? "It's just an attraction," Trump said. "You understand, this would be part of a phase-two or phase-three expansion. It's going to be the largest yacht in the world."

From the re-theming meeting, we headed for the casino, and along the way Trump received warm salutations. A white-haired woman wearing a pink warmup suit and carrying a bucket of quarters said, "Mr. Trump, I just love you, darling." He replied, "Thank you. I love you, too," then turned to me and said, "You see, they're good people. And I like people. You've gotta be nice. They're like friends."

The Castle had two thousand two hundred and thirty-nine slot machines, including, in a far corner, thirteen brand-new and slightly terrifying "Wheel of Fortune"-theme contraptions, which were about to be officially unveiled. On hand were representatives of International Game Technology (the machines' manufacturer), a press entourage worthy of a military briefing in the wake of a Grenada-calibre invasion, and a couple of hundred onlookers—all drawn by the prospect of a personal appearance by Vanna White, the doyenne of "Wheel of Fortune." Trump's arrival generated satisfying expressions of awe from the rubberneckers, though not the spontaneous burst of applause that greeted Vanna, who had been conscripted for what was described as "the ceremonial first pull."

When Trump spoke, he told the gathering, "This is the beginning of a new generation of machine." Vanna pulled the crank, but the crush of reporters made it impossible to tell what was going on or even what denomination of currency had been sacrificed. The demographics of the crowd suggested that the most efficient machine would be one that permitted direct deposit of a Social Security check. After a delay that featured a digital musical cacophony, the machine spat back a few coins. Trump said, "Ladies and gentlemen, it took a little while. We hope it doesn't take you as long. And we just want to thank you for being our friends." And then we were out of there. "This is what we do. What can I tell you?" Trump said, as we made our way through the casino.

Vanna White was scheduled to join us for the helicopter flight back to New York, and later, as we swung over Long Island City, heading for a heliport on the East Side, Trump gave Vanna a little hug and, not for the first time, praised her star turn at the Castle. "For the opening of thirteen slot machines, I'd say we did all right today," he said, and then they slapped high fives.

In a 1990 *Playboy* interview, Trump said that the yacht, the glitzy casinos, the gleaming bronze of Trump Tower were all "props for the show," adding that "the show is 'Trump' and it is sold-out performances everywhere." In 1985, the show moved to Palm Beach. For ten million dollars, Trump bought Mar-a-Lago, a hundred-and-eighteen-room Hispano-Moorish-Venetian castle built in the twenties by Marjorie Merriweather Post and E. F. Hutton, set on seventeen and a half acres extending from the ocean to Lake Worth. Ever since, his meticulous restoration and literal regilding of the property have been a work in progress. The winter of 1995-96 was Mar-a-Lago's first full season as a commercial venture, a private club with a twenty-five-thousand-dollar initiation fee (which later rose to fifty thousand and is now quoted at seventy-five thousand). The combination of the Post-Hutton pedigree and Trump's stewardship offered a paradigm of how an aggressively enterprising devotion to Good Taste inevitably transmutes to Bad Taste—but might nevertheless pay for itself.

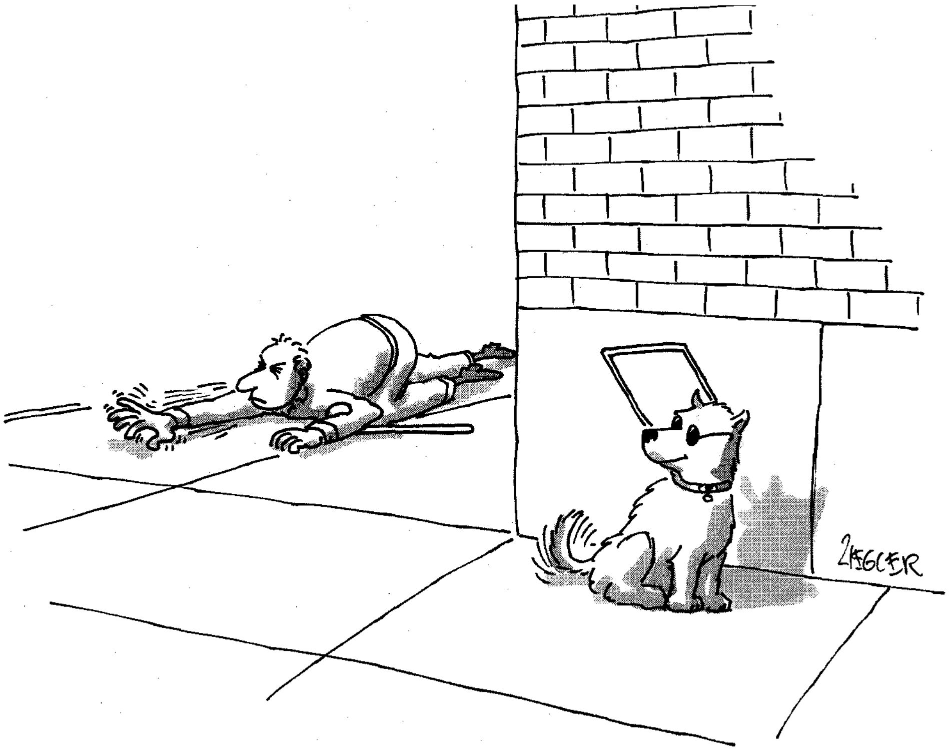
Only Trump and certain of his minions know who among Mar-a-Lago's more than three hundred listed members has actually forked over initiation fees and who's paid how much for the privilege. Across the years, there have been routine leaks by a mysterious unnamed spokesman within the Trump Organization to the effect that this or that member of the British Royal Family was planning to buy a pied-à-terre in Trump Tower. It therefore came as no surprise when, during early recruiting efforts at Mar-a-Lago, Trump announced that the Prince and Princess of Wales, their mutual antipathy notwithstanding, had signed up. Was there any documentation? Well, um, Chuck and Di were *honorary* members. Among the honorary members who have yet to pass through Mar-a-Lago's portals are Henry Kissinger and Elizabeth Taylor.

The most direct but not exactly most serene way to travel to Mar-a-Lago, I discovered one weekend not long ago, is aboard Trump's 727, the same aircraft he gave up during the blip and, after an almost decent interval, bought back. My fellow-passengers included Eric Javits, a lawyer and nephew of the late Senator Jacob Javits, bumming a ride; Ghislaine Maxwell, the daughter of the late publishing tycoon and inadequate swimmer Robert Maxwell, also bumming a ride; Matthew Calamari, a telephone-booth-size bodyguard who is the head of security for the entire Trump Organization; and Eric Trump, Donald's thirteen-year-old son.

The solid-gold fixtures and hardware (sinks, seat-belt clasps, door hinges, screws), well-stocked bar and larder, queen-size bed, and bidet (easily outfitted with a leather-cushioned cover in case of sudden turbulence) implied hedonistic possibilities—the plane often ferried high rollers to Atlantic City—but I witnessed only good clean fun. We hadn't been airborne long when Trump decided to watch a movie. He'd brought along "Michael," a recent release, but twenty minutes after popping it into the VCR he got bored and switched to an old favorite, a Jean Claude Van Damme slugfest called "Bloodsport," which he pronounced "an incredible, fantastic movie." By assigning to his son the task of fast-forwarding through all the plot exposition—Trump's goal being "to get this two-hour movie down to forty-five minutes"—he eliminated any lulls between the nose hammering, kidney tenderizing, and shin whacking. When a beefy bad guy who was about to squish a normal-sized good guy received a crippling blow to the scrotum, I laughed. "Admit it, you're laughing!" Trump shouted. "You want to write that Donald Trump was loving this ridiculous Jean Claude Van Damme movie, but are you willing to put in there that you were loving it, too?"

A small convoy of limousines greeted us on the runway in Palm Beach, and during the ten-minute drive to Mar-a-Lago Trump waxed enthusiastic about a "spectacular, world-class" golf course he was planning to build on county-owned land directly opposite the airport. Trump, by the way, is a skilled golfer. A source extremely close to him—by which I mean off the record, but I can use it—told me that Claude Harmon, a former winner of the Masters tournament and for thirty-three years the club pro at Winged Foot, in Mamaroneck, New York, once described Donald as "the best weekend player" he'd ever seen.

The only formal event on Trump's agenda had already got under way. Annually, the publisher of *Forbes* invites eleven corporate potentates to Florida, where they spend a couple of nights aboard the company yacht, the Highlander, and, during the day, adroitly palpate each other's brains and size up each other's short games. A supplementary group of capital-gains-tax skeptics had been invited to a Friday-night banquet in the Mar-a-Lago ballroom. Trump arrived between the roast-duck appetizer and the roasted-portabello-mushroom salad and took his seat next to Malcolm S. (Steve) Forbes, Jr., the erstwhile Presidential candidate and the chief executive of *Forbes*, at a table that also included *les grands fromages* of Hertz, Merrill Lynch, the C.I.T. Group, and Countrywide Credit Industries. At an adjacent table, Marla Maples Trump, who had just returned from Shreveport, Louisiana, where



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she was rehearsing her role as co-host of the Miss U.S.A. pageant, discussed global politics and the sleeping habits of three-year-old Tiffany with the corporate chiefs and chief spouses of A.T. & T., Sprint, and Office Depot. During coffee, Donald assured everyone present that they were "very special" to him, that he wanted them to think of Mar-a-Lago as home, and that they were all welcome to drop by the spa the next day for a freebie.

Tony Senecal, a former mayor of Martinsburg, West Virginia, who now doubles as Trump's butler and Mar-a-Lago's resident historian, told me, "Some of the restoration work that's being done here is so subtle it's almost not Trump-like." Subtlety, however, is not the dominant motif. Weary from handling Trump's legal work, Jay Goldberg used to retreat with his wife to Mar-a-Lago for a week each year. Never mind the tapestries, murals, frescoes, winged statuary, life-size portrait of Trump (titled "The Visionary"), bathtub-size flower-filled samovars, vaulted Corinthian colonnade, thirty-four-foot ceilings, blinding chandeliers, marquetry, overstuffed and gold-leaf-stamped everything else, Goldberg told me; what nudged him around the bend was a small piece of fruit.

"We were surrounded by a staff of twenty people," he said, "including a footman. I didn't even know what that was. I thought maybe a chiropodist. Anyway, wherever I turned there was always a bowl of fresh fruit. So there I am, in our room, and I decide to step into the bathroom to take a leak. And on the way I grab a kumquat and eat it. Well, by the time I come out of the bathroom the *kumquat has been replaced*."

As for the Mar-a-Lago spa, aerobic exercise is an activity Trump indulges in "as little as possible," and he's therefore chosen not to micromanage its daily affairs. Instead, he brought in a Texas outfit called the Greenhouse Spa, proven specialists in mud wraps, manual lymphatic drainage, reflexology, shiatsu and Hawaiian hot-rock massage, loofah polishes, sea-salt rubs, aromatherapy, acupuncture, peat baths, and Japanese steeping-tub protocol. Evidently, Trump's philosophy of wellness is rooted in a belief that prolonged exposure to exceptionally attractive young female spa attendants will instill in the male clientele a will to live. Accordingly, he limits his role to a pocket veto of key hiring decisions. While giving me a tour of the main exercise room, where Tony Bennett, who does a couple of gigs at Mar-a-Lago each season and has been designated an "artist-in-residence," was taking a brisk walk on a treadmill, Trump introduced me to "our resident physician, Dr. Ginger Lea Southall"—a recent chiropractic-college graduate. As Dr. Ginger, out of earshot, manipulated the sore back of a grateful member, I asked Trump where she had done her training. "I'm not sure," he said. "Baywatch Medical School? Does that sound right? I'll tell you the truth. Once I saw Dr. Ginger's photograph, I didn't really need to look at her résumé or anyone else's. Are you asking, 'Did we hire her because she'd trained at Mount Sinai for fifteen years?' The answer is no. And I'll tell you why: because by the time she's spent fifteen years at Mount Sinai, we don't want to look at her."

MY visit happened to coincide with the coldest weather of the winter, and this gave me a convenient excuse, at frequent intervals, to retreat to my thousand-dollar-a-night suite and huddle under the bedcovers in fetal position. Which is where I was around ten-thirty Saturday night, when I got a call from Tony Senecal, summoning me to the ballroom. The furnishings had been altered since the *Forbes* banquet the previous evening. Now there was just a row of armchairs in the center of the room and a couple of low tables, an arrangement that meant Donald and Marla were getting ready for a late dinner in front of the TV. They'd already been out to a movie with Eric and Tiffany and some friends and bodyguards, and now a theatre-size screen had descended from the ceiling so that they could watch a pay-per-view telecast of a junior-welterweight-championship boxing match between Oscar de la Hoya and Miguel Angel Gonzalez.

Marla was eating something green, while Donald had ordered his favorite, meat loaf and mashed potatoes. "We have a chef who makes the greatest meat loaf in the world," he said. "It's so great I told him to put it on the menu. So whenever we have it, half the people order it. But then afterward, if you ask them what they ate, they always deny it."

Trump is not only a boxing fan but an occasional promoter, and big bouts are regularly staged at his hotels in Atlantic City. Whenever he shows up in person, he drops by to wish the fighters luck beforehand and is always accorded a warm welcome, with the exception of a chilly reception not long ago from the idiosyncratic Polish head-butter and rabbit-puncher Andrew Golota. This was just before Golota went out and pounded Riddick Bowe into retirement, only to get himself disqualified for a series of low blows that would've been perfectly legal in "Bloodsport."

"Golota's a killer," Trump said admiringly. "A stone-cold killer."

When I asked Marla how she felt about boxing, she said, "I enjoy it a lot, just as long as nobody gets hurt."

WHEN a call came a while back from Aleksandr Ivanovich Lebed, the retired general, amateur boxer, and restless pretender to the Presidency of Russia, explaining that he was headed to New York and wanted to arrange a meeting, Trump was pleased but not surprised. The list of superpower leaders and geopolitical strategists with whom Trump has engaged in frank and fruitful exchanges of viewpoints includes Mikhail Gorbachev, Richard Nixon, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, George Bush, former Secretary of Defense William Perry, and the entire Joint Chiefs of Staff. (He's also pals with Sylvester Stallone and Clint Eastwood, men's men who enjoy international reputations for racking up massive body counts.) In 1987, fresh from his grandest public-relations coup—repairing in three and a half months, under budget and for no fee, the Wollman skating rink, in Central Park, a job that the city of New York had spent six years and twelve million dollars bungling—Trump contemplated how, in a larger sphere, he could advertise himself as a doer and dealmaker. One stunt involved orchestrating an "invitation" from the federal government to examine the Williamsburg Bridge, which was falling apart. Trump had no real interest in the job, but by putting on a hard hat and taking a stroll on the bridge for the cameras he stoked the fantasy that he could rebuild the city's entire infrastructure. From there it was only a short leap to saving the planet. What if, say, a troublemaker like Muammar Qaddafi got his hands on a nuclear arsenal? Well, Trump declared, he stood ready to work with the leaders of the then Soviet Union to coördinate a formula for coping with Armageddon-minded lunatics.

The clear purpose of Lebed's trip to America, an unofficial visit that coincided with the second Clinton Inaugural, was to add some reassuring human texture to his image as a plainspoken tough guy. Simultaneously, his domestic political prospects could be enhanced if voters back home got the message that Western capitalists felt comfortable with him. Somewhere in Lebed's calculations was the understanding that, to the nouveau entrepreneurs of the freebooter's paradise that is now Russia, Trump looked and smelled like very old money.

Their rendezvous was scheduled for midmorning. Having enlisted as an interpreter Inga Bogutska, a receptionist whose father, by coincidence, was a Russian general, Trump decided to greet his visitor in the lobby. When it turned out that Lebed, en route from an audience with a group of *Times* editors and reporters, was running late, Trump occupied himself by practicing his golf swing and surveying the female pedestrians in the atrium. Finally, Lebed arrived, a middle-aged but ageless fellow with a weathered, fleshy face and hooded eyes, wearing a gray business suit and an impassive expression. After posing for a *Times* photographer, they rode an elevator to the twenty-sixth floor, and along the way Trump asked, "So, how is everything in New York?"

"Well, it's hard to give an assessment, but I think it is brilliant," Lebed replied. He had a deep, bullfroggy voice, and his entourage of a half-dozen men included an interpreter, who rendered Inga Bogutska superfluous.

"Yes, it's been doing very well," Trump agreed. "New York is on a very strong up. And we've been reading a lot of great things about this gentleman and his country."

"The growing season has barely begun, but I've already been getting death threats."

Inside his office, Trump immediately began sharing with Lebed some of his treasured possessions. "This is a shoe that was given to me by Shaquille O'Neal," he said. "Basketball. *Shaquille O'Neal.* Seven feet three inches, I guess. This is his sneaker, the actual sneaker. In fact, he gave this to me after a game."

"I've always said," Lebed sagely observed, "that after size 45, which I wear, then you start wearing trunks on your feet."

"That's true," said Trump. He moved on to a replica of a Mike Tyson heavyweight-championship belt, followed by an Evander Holyfield glove. "He gave me this on my fiftieth birthday. And then he beat Tyson. I didn't know who to root for. And then, again, here is Shaquille O'Neal's shirt. Here, you might want to see this. This was part of an advertisement for Versace, the fashion designer. These are photographs of Madonna on the stairs at Mar-a-Lago, my house in Florida. And this photograph shows something that we just finished and are very proud of. It's a big hotel called Trump International. And it's been very successful. So we've had a lot of fun."

Trump introduced Lebed to Howard Lorber, who had accompanied him a few months earlier on his journey to Moscow, where they looked at properties to which the Trump moniker might be appended. "Howard has major investments in Russia," he told Lebed, but when Lorber itemized various ventures none seemed to ring a bell.

"See, they don't know you," Trump told Lorber. "With all that investment, they don't know you. Trump they know."

Some "poisonous people" at the *Times*, Lebed informed Trump, were "spreading some funny rumors that you are going to cram Moscow with casinos."

Laughing, Trump said, "Is that right?"

"I told them that I know you build skyscrapers in New York. High-quality skyscrapers."

"We are actually looking at something in Moscow right now, and it would be skyscrapers and hotels, not casinos. Only quality stuff. But thank you for defending me. I'll soon be going again to Moscow. We're looking at the Moskva Hotel. We're also looking at the Rossiya. That's a very big project; I think it's the largest hotel in the world. And we're working with the local government, the mayor of Moscow and the mayor's people. So far, they've been very responsive."

Lebed: "You must be a very confident person. You are building straight into the center."

Trump: "I always go into the center."

Lebed: "I hope I'm not offending by saying this, but I think you are a litmus testing paper. You are at the end of the edge. If Trump goes to Moscow, I think America will follow. So I consider these projects of yours to be very important. And I'd like to help you as best I can in putting your projects into life. I want to create a canal or riverbed for capital flow. I want to minimize the risks and get rid of situations where the entrepreneur has to try to hide his head between his shoulders. I told the New York *Times* I was talking to you because you are a professional—a high-level professional—and if you invest, you invest in real stuff. Serious, high-quality projects. And you deal with serious people. And I deem you to be a very serious person. That's why I'm meeting you."

Trump: "Well, that's very nice. Thank you very much. I have something for you. This is a little token of my respect. I hope you like it. This is a book called 'The Art of the Deal,' which a lot of people have read. And if you read this book you'll know the art of the deal better than I do."

The conversation turned to Lebed's lunch arrangements and travel logistics—"It's very tiring to meet so many people," he confessed—and the dialogue began to feel stilted, as if Trump's limitations as a Kremlinologist had exhausted the potential topics. There was, however, one more subject he wanted to cover.

"Now, you were a boxer, right?" he said. "We have a lot of big matches at my hotels. We just had a match between Riddick Bowe and Andrew Golota, from Poland, who won the fight but was disqualified. He's actually a great fighter if he can ever get through a match without being disqualified. And, to me, you look tougher than Andrew Golota."

In response, Lebed pressed an index finger to his nose, or what was left of it, and flattened it against his face.

"You do look seriously tough," Trump continued. "Were you an Olympic boxer?"

"No, I had a rather modest career."

"Really? The newspapers said you had a great career."

"At a certain point, my company leader put the question straight: either you do the sports or you do the military service. And I selected the military."

"You made the right decision," Trump agreed, as if putting to rest any notion he might have entertained about promoting a Lebed exhibition bout in Atlantic City.

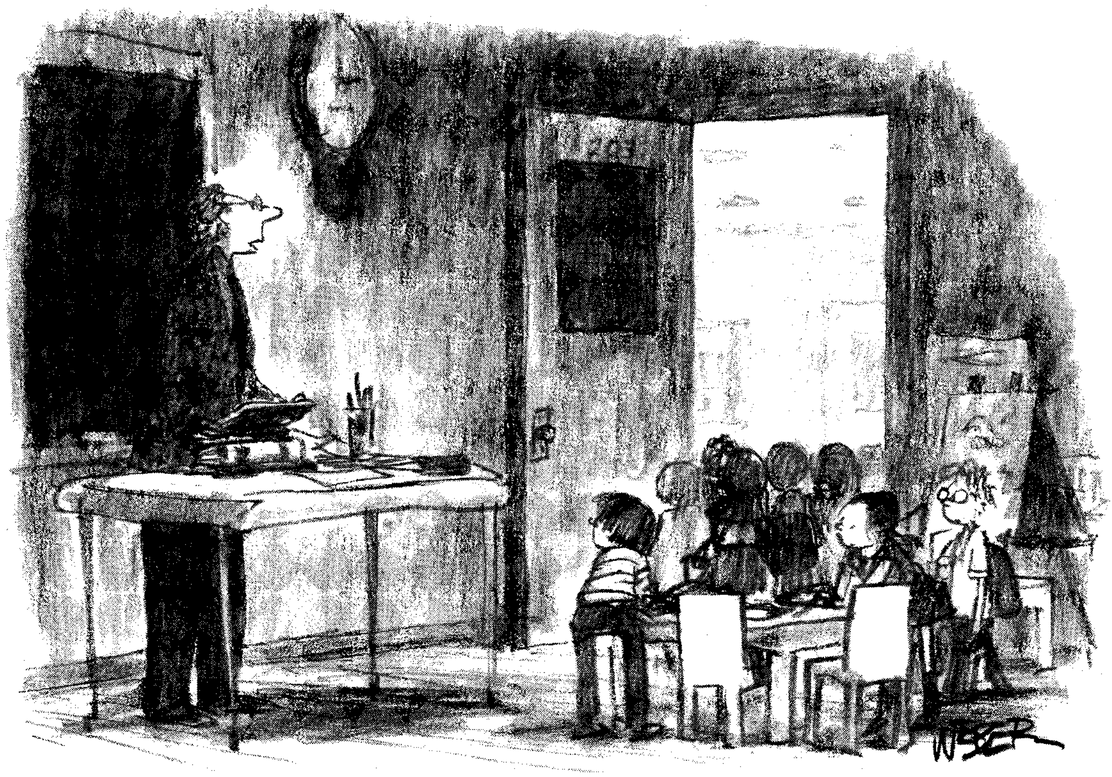
Norma Foerderer came in with a camera to snap a few shots for the Trump archives and to congratulate the general for his fancy footwork in Chechnya. Phone numbers were exchanged, and Lebed, before departing, offered Trump a benediction: "You leave on the earth a very good trace for centuries. We're all mortal, but the things you build will stay forever. You've already proven wrong the assertion that the higher the attic, the more trash there is."

When Trump returned from escorting Lebed to the elevator, I asked him his impressions.

"First of all, you wouldn't want to play nuclear weapons with this fucker," he said. "Does he look as tough and cold as you've ever seen? This is not like your average real-estate guy who's rough and mean. This guy's beyond that. You see it in the eyes. This guy is a killer. How about when I asked, 'Were you a boxer?' Whoa—that nose is a piece of rubber. But me he liked. When we went out to the elevator, he was grabbing me, holding me, he felt very good. And he liked what I do. You know what? I think I did a good job for the country today."

The phone rang—Jesse Jackson calling about some office space Trump had promised to help the Rainbow Coalition lease at 40 Wall Street. ("Hello, Jesse. How ya doin'? You were on Rosie's show? She's terrific, right? Yeah, I think she is. . . . Okay-y-y, how are *you*?") Trump hung up, sat forward, his eyebrows arched, smiling a smile that contained equal measures of surprise and self-satisfaction. "You gotta say, I cover the gamut. Does the kid cover the gamut? Boy, it never ends. I mean, people have no idea. Cool life. You know, it's sort of a cool life."

ONE Saturday this winter, Trump and I had an appointment at Trump Tower. After I'd waited ten minutes, the concierge directed me to the penthouse. When I emerged from the elevator, there Donald stood, wearing a black cashmere topcoat, navy suit, blue-and-white pinstriped shirt, and maroon necktie. "I thought you might like to see my apartment," he said, and as I squinted against the glare of gilt and mirrors in the entrance corridor he added, "I don't really do this." That we both knew this to be a transparent fib—photo spreads of the fifty-three-room triplex and its rooftop park had appeared in several magazines, and it had been featured on "Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous"—in no way undermined my enjoyment of the visual and aural assault that followed: the twenty-nine-foot-high living room with its erupting fountain and vaulted ceiling decorated with neo-Romantic frescoes; the two-story dining room with its carved ivory frieze ("I admit that the ivory's kind of a no-no"); the onyx columns with marble capitals that had come from "a castle in Italy"; the chandelier that originally hung in "a castle in Austria"; the African blue-onyx lavatory. As we admired the view of Central Park, to the north, he said, "This is the greatest apartment ever built. There's never been anything like it. There's no apartment like this anywhere. It was harder to build this apartment than the rest of the building. A lot of it I did just to see if it could be done. All the very wealthy people who think they know great apartments come here and they say, 'Donald, forget it. This is the greatest.'" Very few touches suggested that real people actually lived there—where was it, exactly, that Trump sat around in his boxers, eating roast-beef sandwiches, channel surfing, and scratching where it itched? Where was it that Marla threw her jogging clothes?—but no matter. "Come here, I'll show you how life works," he said, and we turned a couple of corners and wound up in a sitting room that had a Renoir on one wall and a view that extended beyond the Statue of Liberty. "My apartments that face the Park go for twice as much as the apartments that face south. But I consider *this* view to be more beautiful than *that* view, especially at night. As a cityscape, it can't be beat."



"Tomorrow, we'll take on the tobacco industry."

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We then drove down to 40 Wall Street, where members of a German television crew were waiting for Trump to show them around. ("This will be the finest office building anywhere in New York. Not just downtown—anywhere in New York.") Along the way, we stopped for a light at Forty-second Street and First Avenue. The driver of a panel truck in the next lane began waving, then rolled down his window and burbled, "I never see you in person!" He was fortyish, wore a blue watch cap, and spoke with a Hispanic inflection. "But I see you a lot on TV."

"Good," said Trump. "Thank you. I think."

"Where's Marla?"

"She's in Louisiana, getting ready to host the Miss U.S.A. pageant. You better watch it. O.K.?"

"O.K., I promise," said the man in the truck. "Have a nice day, Mr. Trump. And have a *profitable* day."

"Always."

Later, Trump said to me, "You want to know what total recognition is? I'll tell you how you know you've got it. When the Nigerians on the street corners who don't speak a word of English, who have no clue, who're selling watches for some guy in New Jersey—when you walk by and those guys say, 'Trump! Trump!' That's total recognition."

Next, we headed north, to Mount Kisco, in Westchester County—specifically to Seven Springs, a fifty-five-room limestone-and-granite Georgian splendor completed in 1917 by Eugene Meyer, the father of Katharine Graham. If things proceeded according to plan, within a year and a half the house would become the centerpiece of the Trump Mansion at Seven Springs, a golf club where anyone willing to part with two hundred and fifty thousand dollars could tee up. As we approached, Trump made certain I paid attention to the walls lining the driveway. "Look at the quality of this granite. Because I'm like, you know, into quality. Look at the quality of that wall. Hand-carved granite, and the same with the house." Entering a room where two men were replastering a ceiling, Trump exulted, "We've got the pros here! You don't see too many plasterers anymore. I take a union plasterer from New York and bring him up here. You know why? Because he's the best." We canvassed the upper floors and then the basement, where Trump sized up the bowling alley as a potential spa. "This is very much Mar-a-Lago all over again," he said. "A great building, great land, great location. Then the question is what to do with it."

From the rear terrace, Trump mapped out some holes of the golf course: an elevated tee above a par three, across a ravine filled with laurel and dogwood; a couple of parallel par fours above the slope that led to a reservoir. Then he turned to me and said, "I bought this whole thing for seven and a half million dollars. People ask, 'How'd you do that?' I said, 'I don't know.' Does that make sense?" Not really, nor did his next utterance: "You know, nobody's ever seen a granite house before."

Granite? Nobody? Never? In the history of humankind? Impressive.

A few months ago, Marla Maples Trump, with a straight face, told an interviewer about life with hubby: "He really has the desire to have me be more of the traditional wife. He definitely wants his dinner promptly served at seven. And if he's home at six-thirty it should be ready by six-thirty." Oh well, so much for that.

In Trump's office the other morning, I asked whether, in light of his domestic shuffle, he planned to change his living arrangements. He smiled for the first time that day and said, "Where am I going to live? That might be the most difficult question you've asked so far. I want to finish the work on my apartment at Trump International. That should take a few months, maybe two, maybe six. And then I think I'll live there for maybe six months. Let's just say, for a period of time. The buildings always work better when I'm living there."

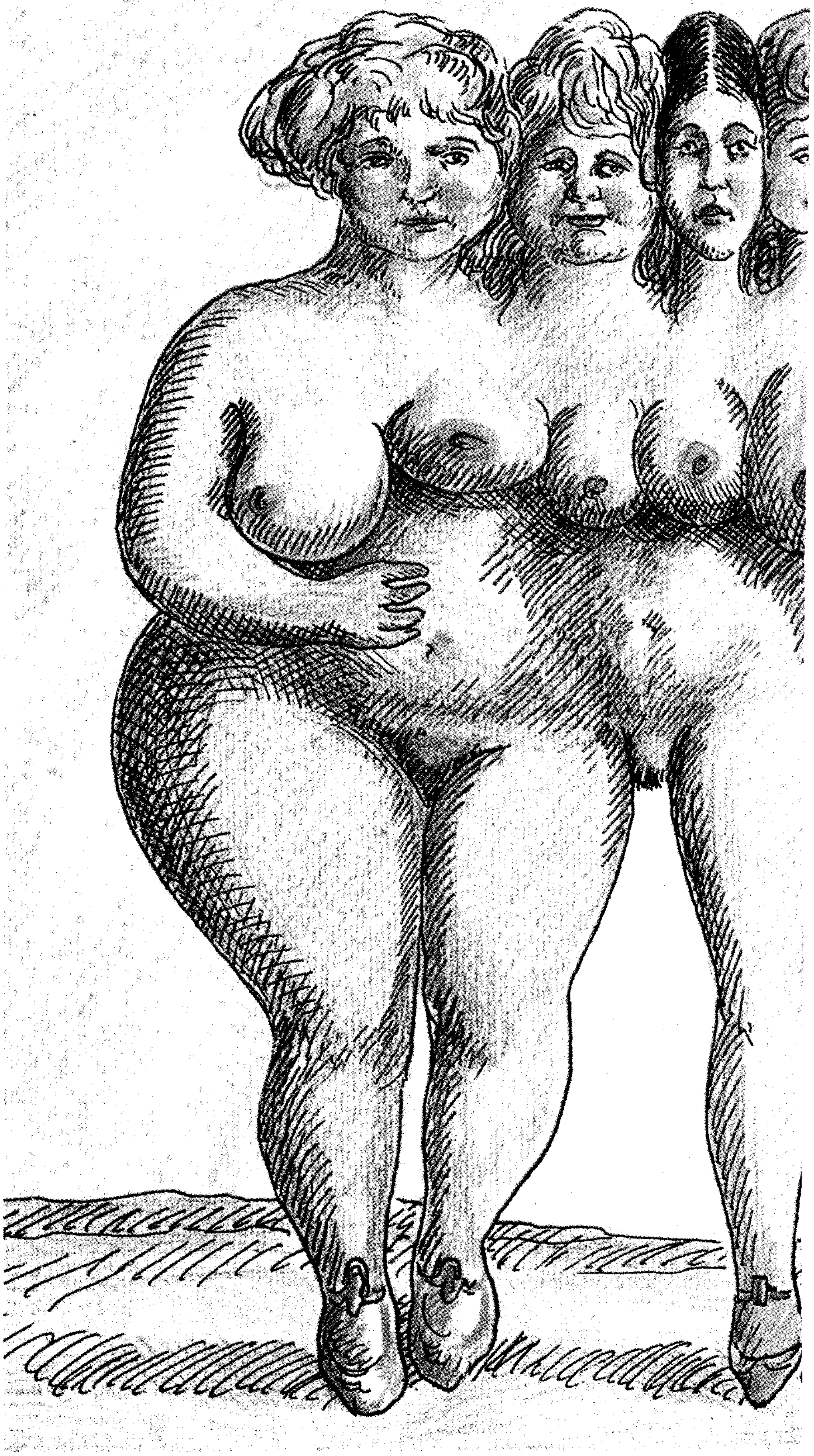
What about the Trump Tower apartment? Would that sit empty?

"Well, I wouldn't sell that. And, of course, there's no one who would ever build an apartment like that. The penthouse at Trump International isn't nearly as big. It's maybe seven thousand square feet. But it's got a living room that is the most spectacular residential room in New York. A twenty-five-foot ceiling. I'm telling you, the best room anywhere. Do you understand?"

I think I did: the only apartment with a better view than the best apartment in the world was the same apartment. Except for the one across the Park, which had the most spectacular living room in the world. No one had ever seen a granite house before. And, most important, every square inch belonged to Trump, who had aspired to and achieved the ultimate luxury, an existence unmolested by the rumbling of a soul. "Trump"—a fellow with universal recognition but with a suspicion that an interior life was an intolerable inconvenience, a creature everywhere and nowhere, uniquely capable of inhabiting it all at once, all alone. ♦

MANY MUSES

The Parisian artist Roland Topor, who died on April 16th, at the age of fifty-nine, applied his demonic wit to just about every visual and literary form: he painted, drew (the dozen or so goddesses here were done for the magic-lantern sequence in Fellini's "Casanova"), wrote, designed, acted, and directed theatre, television, and films. Roman Polanski's 1976 movie "The Tenant" is based on Topor's first novel, "Le Locataire Chimérique"; one of Topor's animated films, "La Planète Sauvage," won a Special Jury Prize at Cannes in 1972; and "Marquis," his bawdy farce about de Sade's life in the Bastille, has drawn fans to Film Forum. As an actor, he appeared in Werner Herzog's "Nosferatu" and Volker Schlöndorff's "Swann in Love." He now lies alongside Baudelaire, Soutine, and Maupassant in the cemetery of Montparnasse, in the quarter of Paris named for the home of the Muses.



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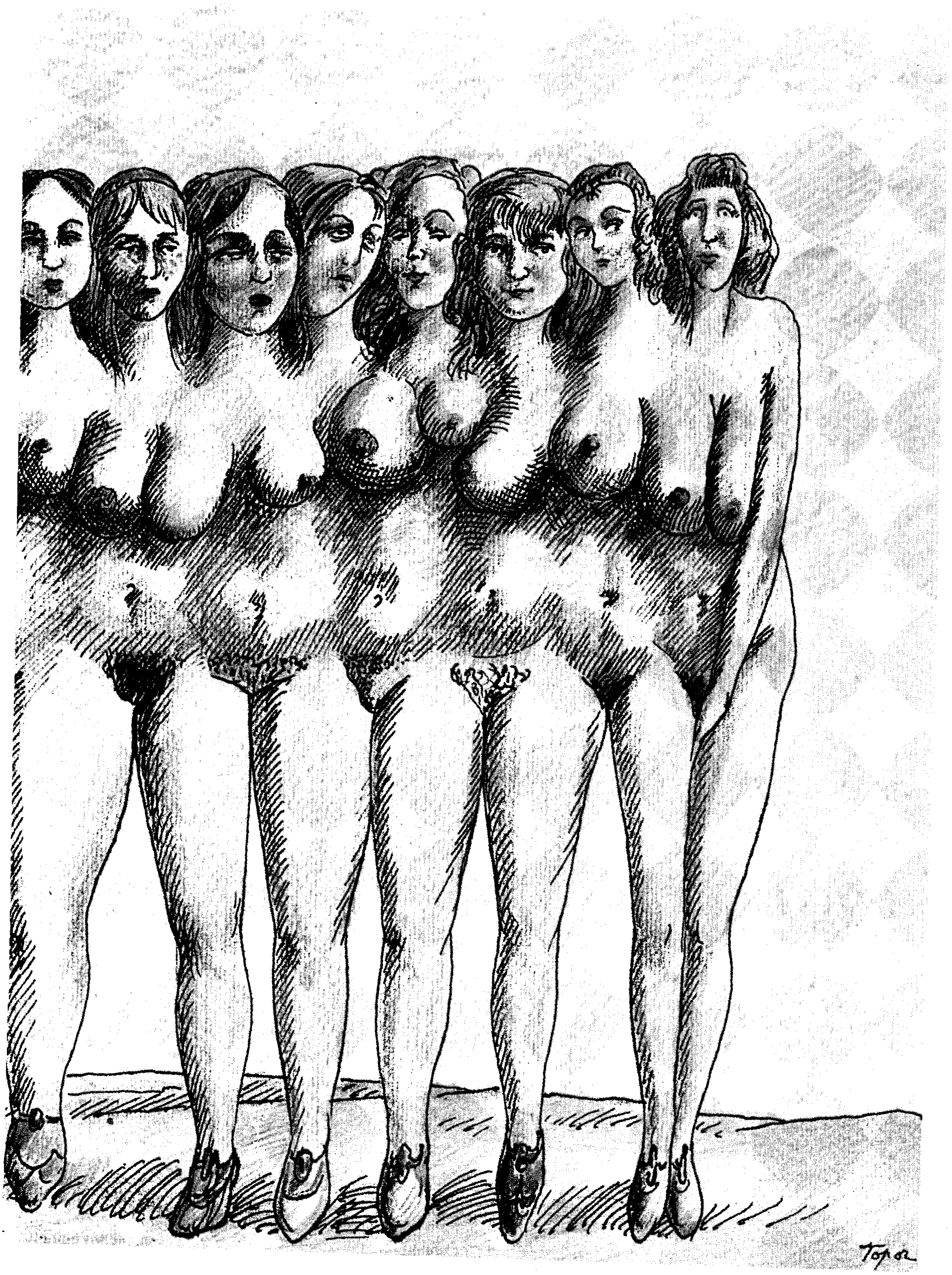

Topor

FICTION

US OR ME

A picnic on a windy afternoon.

BY IAN McEWAN

THE beginning is simple to mark. We were in sunlight under a turkey oak, partly protected from a strong, gusty wind. I was kneeling on the grass with a corkscrew in my hand, and Clarissa was passing me the bottle—a 1987 Daumas Gassac. This was the moment, this was the pinprick on the time map: I was stretching out my hand, and as the cool neck and the black foil touched my palm we heard a man's shout. We turned to look across the field and saw the danger. Next thing, I was running toward it. The transformation was absolute: I don't recall dropping the corkscrew, or getting to my feet, or making a decision, or hearing the caution Clarissa called after me. What idiocy, to be racing into this story and its labyrinths, sprinting away from our happiness among the fresh spring grasses by the oak. There was the shout again, and a child's cry, enfeebled by the wind that roared in the tall trees along the hedgerows. I ran faster. And there, suddenly, from different points around the field, four other men were converging on the scene, running like me.

I see us from two hundred feet up, through the eyes of the buzzard we had watched earlier, soaring, circling, and dipping in the tumult of currents: five men running silently toward the center of a hundred-acre field. I approached from the southeast, with the wind at my back. About two hundred yards to my left two men ran side by side. They were farm laborers who had been repairing the fence along the field's southern edge where it skirts the road. The same distance beyond them was the motorist, John Logan, whose car was banked on the grass verge with its door, or doors, wide open. Knowing what I know now, it's odd to evoke the figure of Jed Parry directly ahead of me, emerging from a line of beeches on the far side of the field a quarter of a mile away, running into the wind. To the buzzard, Parry and I were tiny forms, our white shirts brilliant against the green, rushing toward each other like lovers, innocent of the grief this entanglement would bring. The encounter that would unhinge us was minutes away, its enormity disguised from us not only by the barrier of time but by the colossus in the center of the field that drew us in with the power of a terrible ratio that set fabulous magnitude against the puny human distress at its base.

What was Clarissa doing? She said she walked quickly toward the center of the field. I don't know how she resisted the urge to run. By the time it happened—the event I am about to describe, the fall—she had almost caught us up, and was well placed as an observer, unencumbered by participation, by the ropes and the shouting, and by our fatal lack of coöperation. What I describe is shaped by what Clarissa saw, too, by what we told each other in the time of obsessive reëxamination that followed: the aftermath, an appropriate term for what happened in a field waiting for its early-summer mowing. The aftermath, the second crop, the growth promoted by that first cut in May.

I'm holding back, delaying the information. I'm lingering in the prior moment because it was a time when other outcomes were still possible; the convergence of six figures in a flat green space has a comforting geometry from the buzzard's perspective, the knowable, limited plane of the snooker table. The initial conditions, the force and the direction of the force, define all the consequent pathways, all the angles of collision and return, and the glow of the overhead light bathes the field, the baize and all its moving bodies, in reassuring clarity. I think that while we were still converging, before we made contact, we were in a state of mathematical grace. I linger on our dispositions, the relative distances and the compass point—because, as far as these occurrences were concerned, this was the last time I understood anything clearly at all.

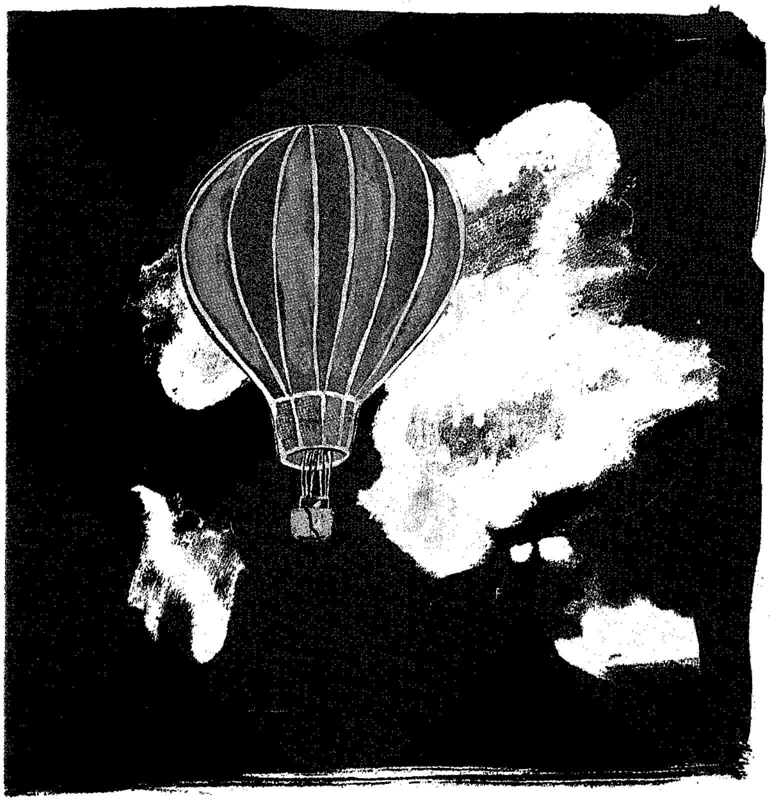
What were we running toward? I don't think any of us would ever know fully. But superficially the answer was a balloon. Not the nominal space that encloses a cartoon character's speech or thought, or, by analogy, the kind that's driven by mere hot air. It was an enormous balloon filled with helium, that elemental gas forged from hydrogen in the nuclear furnace of the stars, first step along the way in the generation of multiplicity and variety of matter in the universe, including our selves and all our thoughts.

We were running toward a catastrophe, which itself was a kind of furnace in whose heat identities and fates would buckle into new shapes. At the base of the balloon was a basket in which there was a boy, and beside the basket, clinging to a rope, was a man in need of help.

EVEN without the balloon the day would have been marked for memory, though in the most pleasurable of ways, for this was a reunion after a separation of six weeks, the longest Clarissa and I had spent apart in our seven years. On the way out to Heathrow I had made a detour into Covent Garden and found a semi-legal place to park, right outside Carluccio's. I went in and put together a picnic whose centerpiece was a great ball of mozzarella, which the assistant fished out of an earthenware vat with a wooden claw. I also bought black olives, mixed salad, and focaccia. Then I hurried up Long Acre to Bertram Rota's to take delivery of Clarissa's birthday present. Apart from the flat and our car, it was the most expensive single item I had ever bought. The rarity of this little book seemed to give off a heat I could feel through the thick brown wrapping paper as I walked back up the street.

Forty minutes later I was scanning the screens for arrival information. The

Boston flight had only just landed and I guessed I had a half-hour wait. If one ever wanted proof of Darwin's contention that the many expressions of emotion in humans are universal, genetically inscribed, then a few minutes at the arrivals gate in Heathrow's Terminal Four should suffice. I saw the same joy, the same uncontrollable smile, in the faces of a Nigerian earth mama, a thin-lipped Scottish granny, and a pale, correct Japanese businessman as they wheeled their trolleys in and recognized a figure in the expectant crowd. Observing human variety can give pleasure, but so, too, can human sameness. I kept hearing the same sighing sound on a downward note, often breathed through a name as two people pressed forward to go into their embrace. Was it a major second or a minor third, or somewhere in between? Pa-pa! Yolan-ta! Ho-bi! Nz-e! There was also a rising note, crooned into the solemn, wary faces of babies by long-absent fathers or grandparents, cajoling, beseeching an immediate return of love. Hannah? Tom-ee? Let me in!



FILIP PAGOWSKI

The variety was in the private dramas: a father and a teen-age son, Turkish perhaps, stood in a long silent clinch, forgiving each other, or mourning a loss, oblivious of the baggage trolleys jamming around them; identical twins, women in their fifties, greeted each other with clear distaste, just touching hands and kissing without making contact; a small American boy, hoisted onto the shoulders of a father he did not recognize, screamed to be put down, provoking a fit of temper in his tired mother.

But mostly it was smiles and hugs, and in thirty-five minutes I experienced more than fifty theatrical happy endings, each one with the appearance of being slightly less well acted than the one before, until I began to feel emotionally exhausted and suspected that even the children were being insincere. I was just wondering how convincing I myself could be now in greeting Clarissa when she tapped me on the shoulder, having missed me in the crowd and circled round. Immediately my detachment vanished, and I called out her name, in tune with all the rest.

Less than an hour later we were parked by a track that ran through beechwoods in the Chiltern Hills, near Christmas Common. While Clarissa changed her shoes I loaded a backpack with our picnic. We set off down our path arm in arm, still elated by our reunion; what was familiar about her—the size and feel of her hand, the warmth and tranquillity in her voice, the Celt's pale skin and green eyes—was also novel, gleaming in an alien light, reminding me of our very first meetings and the months we spent falling in love. Or, I imagined, I was another man, my own sexual competitor, come to steal her from me. When I told her she laughed and said I was the world's most complicated simpleton, and it was while we stopped to kiss and wondered aloud whether we should not have driven straight home to bed that we glimpsed through the fresh foliage the helium balloon drifting dreamily across the wooded valley to our west. Neither the man nor the boy was visible to us. I remember thinking, but not saying, that it was a precarious form of transport when the wind rather than the pilot set the course. Then I thought that perhaps this was the very nature of its attraction. And instantly the idea went out of my mind.

We went through College Wood toward Pishill, stopping to admire the new greenery on the beeches. Each leaf seemed to glow with an internal light. We talked about the purity of this color, the beech leaf in spring, and how looking at it cleared the mind. As we walked into the wood the wind began to get up and the branches creaked like rusted machinery. We knew the route well. This was surely the finest landscape within an hour of central London. I loved the pitch and roll of the fields and their scatterings of chalk and flint, and the paths that dipped across them to sink into the darkness of the beech stands, certain neglected, badly drained valleys where thick, iridescent mosses covered the rotting tree trunks and where you occasionally glimpsed a muntjac blundering through the undergrowth.

For much of the time as we walked westward we were talking about Clarissa's research: John Keats dying in Rome in the house at the foot of the Spanish Steps where he lodged with his friend Joseph Severn. Was it possible there were still three or four unpublished letters of Keats's in existence? Might one of them be addressed to Fanny Brawne? Clarissa had reason to think so and had spent part of a sabbatical term travelling around Spain and Portugal, visiting houses known to Fanny Brawne and to Keats's sister, Fanny. Now she was back from Boston, where she had been working in the Houghton Library, at Harvard, trying to trace correspondence from Severn's remote family connections. Keats's last known letter was written, almost three months before he died, to his old friend Charles Brown. It's rather stately in tone, and typical in throwing out, almost as parenthesis, a brilliant description of artistic creation: "the knowledge of contrast, feeling for light and shade, all that information (primitive sense) necessary for a poem, are great enemies to the recovery of the stomach." It's the one with the famous farewell, so piercing in its reticence and courtesy: "I can scarcely bid you good-bye, even in a letter. I always made an awkward bow. God bless you! John Keats." But all the biographies agree that Keats was in remission from tuberculosis when he wrote this letter, and remained so for a further ten days. He visited the Villa Borghese, and strolled down the Corso. He listened with pleasure to Severn playing Haydn, he mischievously tipped his dinner out the window in protest at the quality of the cooking, and he even thought about starting a poem. If letters existed from this period, why would Severn or, more likely, Brown have wanted to suppress them? Clarissa thought she had found the answer in a couple of references in correspondence between distant relations of Brown's written in the eighteen-forties, but she needed more evidence, different sources.

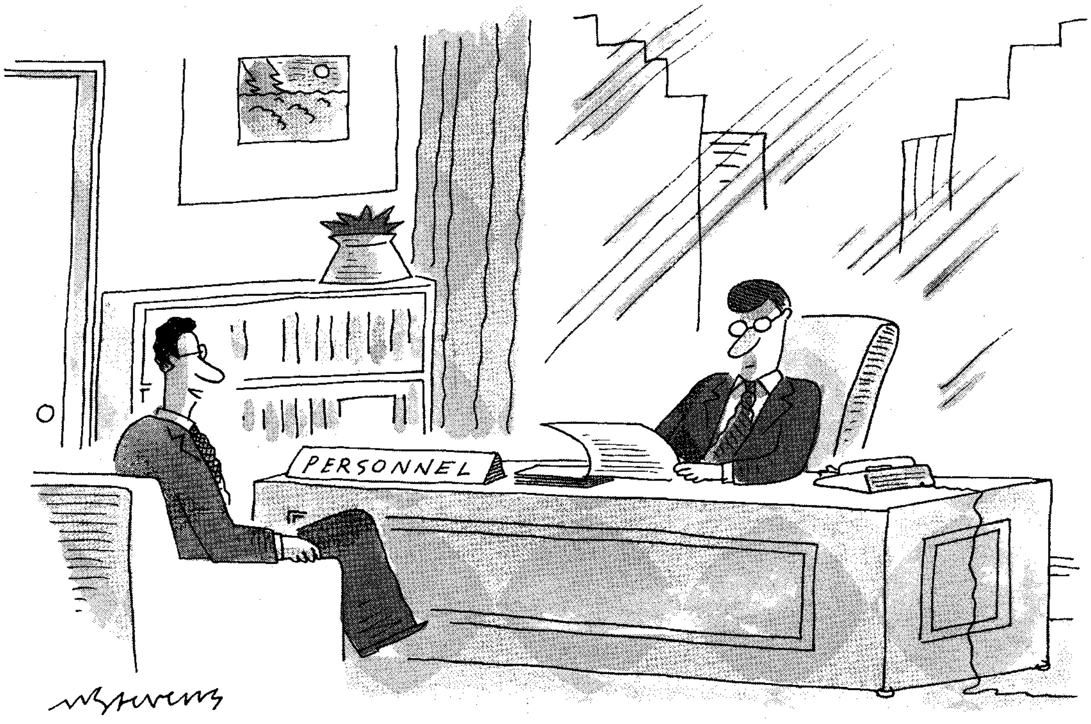
"He knew he'd never see Fanny again," Clarissa said. "He wrote to Brown and said that to see her name written would be more than he could bear. But he never stopped thinking about her. He was strong enough those days in December, and he loved her so much. It's easy to imagine him writing a letter he never intended to send."

I squeezed her hand and said nothing. I knew little about Keats or his poetry, but I thought it possible that in his hopeless situation he would not have wanted to write precisely because he loved her so much. Lately I'd had the idea that Clarissa's interest in these hypothetical letters had something to do with our own situation, and with her conviction that love that did not find its expression in a letter was not perfect. In the months after we met and before we bought the apartment she had written me some beauties, passionately abstract in their exploration of the ways our love was different from and superior to any that had ever existed. Perhaps that's the essence of a love letter, to celebrate the unique. I had tried to match hers, but all that sincerity would permit me were the facts, and they seemed miraculous enough to me: a beautiful woman loved and wanted to be loved by a large, clumsy, balding fellow who could hardly believe his luck.

WE stopped to watch the buzzard as we were approaching Maidensgrove. The balloon may have recrossed our path while we were in the woods that cover the valleys around the nature reserve. By the early afternoon we were on the Ridgeway Path, walking north along the line of the escarpment. Then we struck out along one of those broad fingers of land that project westward from the Chilterns into the rich farmland below. Across the Vale of Oxford we could make out the outlines of the Cotswold Hills, and beyond them, perhaps, the Brecon Beacons, rising in a faint-blue mass. Our plan had been to picnic right out on the end, where the view was best, but the wind was too strong by now. We went back across the field and sheltered among the oaks along the northern side. And it was because of these trees that we did not see the balloon's descent. Later I wondered why it had not been blown miles away. Later still I discovered that the wind at five hundred feet was not the same that day as the wind at ground level.

The Keats conversation faded as we unpacked our lunch. Clarissa pulled the bottle from the bag and held it by its base as she offered it to me. As I have said, the neck touched my palm as we heard the shout. It was a baritone, on a rising note of fear. It marked the beginning and, of course, an end. At that moment a chapter—no, a whole stage—of my life closed. Had I known, and had there been a spare second or two, I might have allowed myself a little nostalgia. We were seven years into a childless marriage of love. Clarissa Mellon was also in love with another man, but, with his two-hundredth birthday coming up, he was little trouble. In fact he helped in the combative exchanges that were part of our equilibrium, our way of talking about work. We lived in an Art Deco apartment block in North London with a below-average share of worries—a money shortage for a year or so, an unsubstantiated cancer scare, the divorces and illnesses of friends, Clarissa's irritation with my occasional and manic bouts of dissatisfaction with my kind of work—but there was nothing that threatened our free and intimate existence.

What we saw when we stood up from our picnic was this: a huge balloon, the size of a house, the shape of a teardrop, had come down in the field. The pilot must have been halfway out of the passenger basket as it touched the ground. His leg had become entangled in a rope that was attached to an anchor. Now, as the wind gusted, and pushed and lifted the balloon toward the escarpment, he was being half dragged, half carried across the field. In the basket was a child, a boy of about ten. In a sud-



"I was at a high-powered investment firm for seven years and a high-powered penal institution for a year and a half."

den lull, the man was on his feet, clutching at the basket, or at the boy. Then there was another gust, and the pilot was on his back, bumping over the rough ground, trying to dig his feet in for purchase, or lunging for the anchor behind him in order to secure it in the earth. Even if he had been able, he would not have dared disentangle himself from the anchor rope. He needed his weight to keep the balloon on the ground, and the wind could have snatched the rope from his hands.

As I ran I heard him shouting at the boy, urging him to leap clear of the basket. But the boy was tossed from one side to another as the balloon lurched across the field. He regained his balance and got a leg over the edge of the basket. The balloon rose and fell, thumping into a hummock, and the boy dropped backward out of sight. Then he was up again, arms stretched out toward the man and shouting something in return—words or inarticulate fear, I couldn't tell.

I must have been a hundred yards away when the situation came under control. The wind had dropped, the man was on his feet, bending over the anchor as he drove it into the ground. He had unlooped the rope from his leg. For some reason—complacency, exhaustion, or simply because he was doing what he was told—the boy remained where he was. The towering balloon wavered and tilted and tugged, but the beast was tamed. I slowed my pace, though I did not stop. As the man straightened, he saw us—or at least the farmworkers and me—and he waved us on. He still needed help, but I was glad to slow to a brisk walk. The farm laborers were also walking now. One of them was coughing loudly. But the man with the car, John Logan, knew something we didn't and kept on running. As for Jed Parry, my view of him was blocked by the balloon that lay between us.

The wind renewed its rage in the treetops just before I felt its force on my back. Then it struck the balloon, which ceased its innocent comical wagging and was suddenly stilled. Its only motion was a shimmer of strain that rippled out across its ridged surface as the contained energy accumulated. It broke free, the anchor flew up in a spray of dirt, and balloon and basket rose ten feet in the air. The boy was thrown back, out of sight. The pilot had the rope in his hands and was lifted two feet clear off the ground. If Logan had not reached him and taken hold of one of the many dangling lines, the balloon would have carried the boy away. Instead, both men were now being pulled across the field, and the farmworkers and I were running again.

I got there before them. When I took a rope the basket was above head height. The boy inside it was screaming. Despite the wind, I caught the smell of urine. Jed Parry was on a rope seconds after me, and the two farmworkers, Joseph Lacey and Toby Greene, caught hold just after him. Greene was having a coughing fit, but he kept his grip. The pilot was shouting instructions at us, but too frantically, and no one was listening. He had been struggling too long, and now he was exhausted and emotionally out of control. With five of us on the lines the balloon was secured. We simply had to keep steady on our feet and pull hand over hand to bring the basket down, and this, despite whatever the pilot was shouting, was what we began to do.

By this time we were standing on the escarpment. The ground dropped away sharply at a gradient of about twenty-five per cent, and then levelled out into a gentle slope toward the bottom. In winter this is a favorite tobogganing spot for local kids. We were all talking at once. Two of us, myself and the motorist, wanted to walk the balloon away from the edge. Someone thought the priority was to get the boy out. Someone else was calling for the balloon to be pulled down so that we could anchor it firmly. I saw no contradiction, for we could be pulling the balloon down as we moved back into the field. But the second opinion was prevailing. The pilot had a fourth idea, but no one knew or cared what it was.

I should make something clear. There may have been a vague communality of purpose, but we were never a team. There was no chance, no time. Coincidences of time and place, a predisposition to help had brought us together under the balloon. No one was in charge—or everyone was, and we were in a shouting match. The pilot, red-faced, bawling and sweating, we ignored. Incompetence came off him like heat. But we were beginning to bawl our own instructions, too. I know that if I had been uncontested leader the tragedy would not have happened. Later I heard some of the others say the same thing about themselves. But there was not time, no opportunity for force of character to show. Any leader, any firm plan would have been preferable to none. No human society, from the hunter-gatherer to the postindustrial, has come to the attention of anthropologists that did not have its leaders and the led; and no emergency was ever dealt with effectively by democratic process.

It was not so difficult to bring the passenger basket down low enough for us to see inside. We had a new problem. The boy was curled up on the floor. His arms covered his face and he was gripping his hair tightly. "What's his name?" we said to the red-faced man.

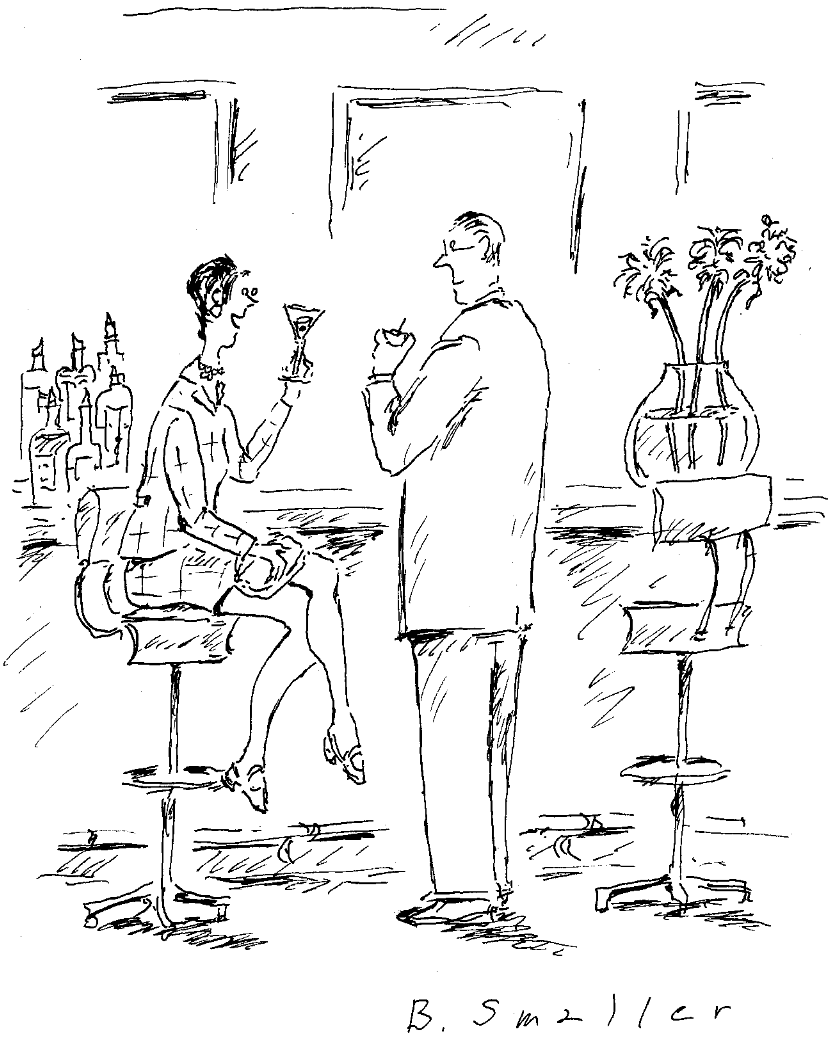
"Harry."

"Harry!" we shouted. "Come on Harry. Harry! Take my hand, Harry. Get out of there, Harry!"

But Harry curled up tighter. He flinched each time we said his name. Our words were like stones thrown down at his body. He was in paralysis of will, a state known as learned helplessness, often noted in laboratory animals subjected to uncontrollable stress; all impulses to problem solving disappear, all instinct for survival drains away. We pulled the basket down to the ground and managed to keep it there, and we were just leaning in to try and lift the boy out when the pilot shouldered us aside and attempted to climb in. He said later that he told us what he was trying to do. We heard nothing for our own shouting and swearing. What he was doing seemed ridiculous, but his intentions, it turned out, were completely sensible. He wanted to deflate the balloon by pulling a cord that was tangled in the basket.

"Yer great pillock!" Lacey shouted. "Help us reach the lad out."

I heard what was coming two seconds before it reached us. It was as though an express train were traversing the treetops, hurtling toward us. An airy, whining, whooshing sound grew to full volume in half a second. At the inquest, the Met office figures for wind speeds that day were part of the evidence, and there were some gusts, it was said, of seventy miles an hour. This must have been one, but



"I love blue Martinis. It's like the fifties and the nineties all mixed up together."

• •

before I let it reach us let me freeze the frame—there's a security in stillness—to describe our circle.

To my right the ground dropped away. Immediately to my left was John Logan, a family doctor from Oxford, forty-two years old, married to a historian, with two children. He was not the youngest of our group, but he was the fittest. He played tennis to county level, and belonged to a mountaineering club. He had done a stint with a mountain rescue team in the Western Highlands. Logan was a mild, reticent man, apparently, otherwise he might have been able to force himself usefully on us as a leader. To his left was Joseph Lacey, sixty-three, farm laborer, odd-job man, captain of his local bowls team. He lived with his wife in Watlington, a small town at the foot of the escarpment. On his left was his mate, Toby Greene, fifty-eight, also a farm laborer, unmarried, living with his mother at Russell's Water. Both men worked for the Stonor estate. Greene was the one with the smoker's cough. Next around the circle, trying to get into the basket, was the pilot, Humphrey Gadd, fifty-five, an executive in a small advertising company, who lived in Reading with his wife and one of their grownup children, who was mentally handicapped. At the inquest, Gadd was found to have breached half a dozen basic safety procedures, which the coroner listed tonelessly. Gadd's ballooning license was withdrawn. The boy in the basket was Harry Gadd, his grandson, ten years old, from Camberwell, London. Facing me, with the ground sloping away to his left, was Jed Parry. He was twenty-eight, unemployed, living on an inheritance in Hampstead.

This was the crew. As far as we were concerned, the pilot had abdicated his authority. We were breathless, excited, determined on our separate plans, while the boy was beyond participating in his own survival. He lay in a heap, blocking out the world with his forearms. Lacey, Greene, and I were attempting to fish him out, and now Gadd was climbing over the top of us. Logan and Parry were calling out their own suggestions. Gadd had placed one foot by his grandson's head, and Greene was cussing him when it happened. A mighty fist socked the balloon in two rapid blows, one-two, the second more vicious than the first. And the first was vicious. It jerked Gadd right out of the basket onto the ground, and it lifted the balloon five feet or so, straight into the air. Gadd's considerable weight was removed from the equation. The rope ran through my grip, scorching my palms, but I managed to keep hold, with two feet of line spare. The others kept hold, too. The basket was right above our heads now, and we stood with arms upraised, like Sunday bell ringers. Into our amazed silence, before the shouting could resume, the second punch came and knocked the balloon up and westward. Suddenly we were treading the air, with all our weight in the grip of our fists.

Those one or two ungrounded seconds occupy as much space in memory as might a long journey up an uncharted river. My first impulse was to hang on in order to keep the balloon weighted down. The child was incapable, and was about to be borne away. Two miles to the west were high-voltage power lines. A child alone and needing help. It was my duty to hang on, and I thought we would all do the same.

Almost simultaneous with the desire to stay on the rope and save the boy, barely a neuronal pulse later, came other thoughts, in which fear and instant calculations of logarithmic complexity were fused. We were rising, and the ground was dropping away as the balloon was pushed westward. I knew I had to get my legs and feet locked round the rope. But the end of the line barely reached below my waist, and my grip was slipping. My legs flailed in the empty air. Every fraction of a second that passed increased the drop, and the point must come when to let go would be impossible or fatal. And compared with me Harry was safe curled up in the basket. The balloon might well come down safely at the bottom of the hill. And perhaps my impulse to hang on was nothing more than a continuation of what I had been attempting moments before, simply a failure to adjust quickly.

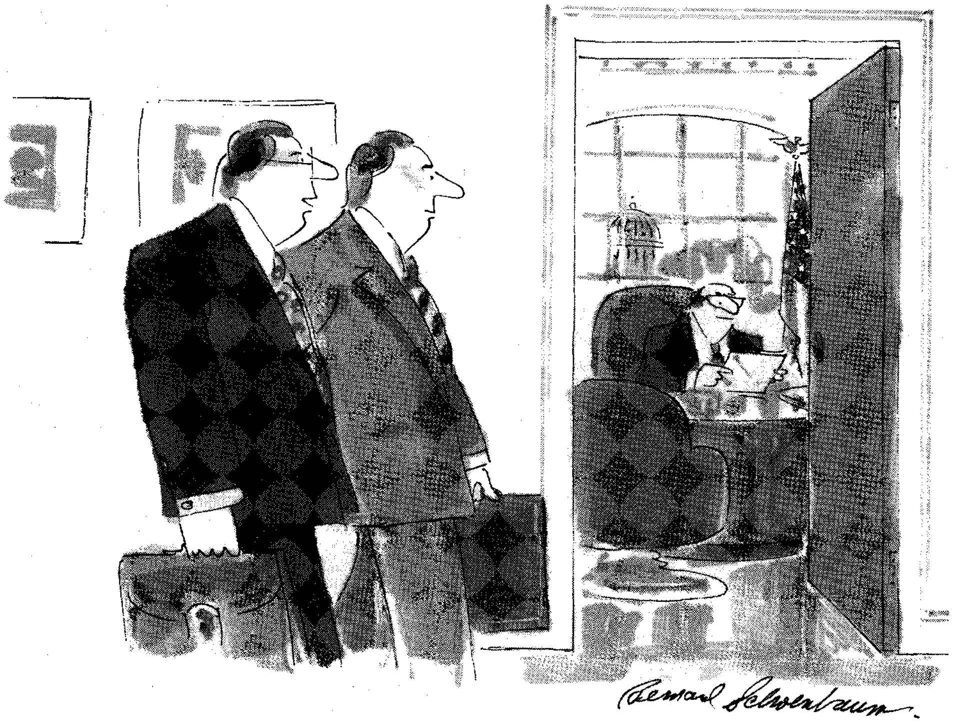
And again, less than one adrenally incensed heartbeat later, another variable was added to the equation: someone let go, and the balloon and its hangers on lurched upward another several feet.

I didn't know, nor have I ever discovered, who let go first. I'm not prepared to accept that it was me. But everyone claims not to have been first. What is certain is that if we had not broken ranks, our collective weight would have brought the balloon to earth a quarter the way down the slope a few seconds later as the gust subsided. But, as I've said, there was no team, there was no plan, no agreement to be broken. No failure. So can we accept that it was right, every man for himself? Were we all happy afterward that this was a reasonable course? We never had that comfort, for there was a deeper covenant, ancient and automatic, written in our nature. Coöperation—the basis of our earliest hunting successes, the force behind our evolving capacity for language, the glue of our social cohesion. Our misery in the aftermath was proof that we knew we had failed ourselves. But letting go was in our nature, too. Selfishness is also written on our hearts. This is our mammalian conflict—what to give to the others and what to keep for yourself. Treading that line, keeping the others in check and being kept in check by them, is what we call morality. Hanging a few feet above the Chilterns escarpment, our crew enacted morality's ancient, irresolvable dilemma: us, or me.

Someone said me, and then there was nothing to be gained by saying us. Mostly, we are good when it makes sense. A good society is one that makes sense of being good. Suddenly, hanging there below the basket, we were a bad society, we were disintegrating. Suddenly the sensible choice was to look out for yourself. The child was not my child, and I was not going to die for it. The moment I glimpsed a body fall away—but whose?—and I felt the balloon lurch upward, the matter was settled: altruism had no place. Being good made no sense. I let go and fell, I reckon, about twelve feet. I landed heavily on my side and I got away with a bruised thigh. Around me—before or after, I'm not so sure—bodies were thumping to the ground. Jed Parry was unhurt. Toby Greene broke his ankle. Joseph Lacey, the oldest, who had done his National Service with a paratroop regiment, did no more than wind himself.

By the time I got to my feet the balloon was fifty yards away, and one man was still dangling by his rope. In John Logan, husband, father, doctor, and mountain rescue worker, the flame of altruism must have burned a little stronger. It didn't need much. When four of us let go, the balloon, with six hundred pounds shed, must have surged upward. A delay of one second would have been enough to close his options. When I stood up and saw him, he was a hundred feet up and rising, just where the ground itself was falling. He wasn't struggling, he wasn't kicking or trying to claw his way up. He hung perfectly still along the line of the rope, all his energies concentrated in his weakening grip. He was already a tiny figure, almost black against the sky. There was no sight of the boy. The balloon and its basket lifted away and westward, and the smaller Logan became, the more terrible it was, so terrible it was funny, it was a stunt, a joke, a cartoon, and a frightened laugh heaved out of my chest. For this was preposterous, the kind of thing that happened to Bugs Bunny, or Tom, or Jerry, and for an instant I thought it wasn't true, and that only I could see right through the joke, and that my utter disbelief would set reality straight and see Dr. Logan safely to the ground.

I don't know whether the others were standing or sprawling. Toby Greene was probably doubled up over his ankle. But I do remember the silence into which I laughed. No exclamations, no shouted instructions like before. Mute helplessness. He was two hundred yards away now, and perhaps three hundred feet above the ground. Our silence was a kind of acceptance, a death warrant. Or it was horrified shame, because the wind had dropped, and barely stirred against our backs. He had been on the rope so long that I began to think he might stay there until the balloon drifted down, or the boy came to his senses and found the valve that released the gas, or until some beam, or god, or some other impossible cartoon thing came and gathered him up. Even as I had that hope we saw him slip down right to the end of the rope. And still he hung there. For two seconds, three, four. And then he let go. Even then, there was a fraction of time when he barely fell, and I still thought there was a chance that a freak physical law, a furious thermal, some phenomenon no more astonishing than the one we were witnessing would intervene and bear him up. We watched him drop. You could see the acceleration. No forgiveness, no special dispensation for flesh, or bravery, or kindness. Only ruthless gravity. And from somewhere, perhaps from him, perhaps from some indifferent crow, a thin squawk cut through the stilled air. He fell as he had hung, a stiff little black stick. I've never seen such a terrible thing as that falling man. ◆



"Careful. He attaches significance to everything you say."

A CRITIC AT LARGE

THE LOVES OF HIS LIFE

What the choreographer Frederick Ashton needed to create British dance.

BY ARLENE CROCE

BIOGRAPHIES of artists are notably tricky to write: the greater the art, the less there is for the biographer to get hold of. The artist's life is absorbed by that other reality which is the art, and what's left over—the husk of a life—is comparatively uninteresting. When the artist is a dancer or a choreographer, the biographer is faced with the special task of commemorating someone whose whole glory is to have disappeared completely, in art as well as in life. The great artists of dance disappear into legend, and they tend to blur together in our minds. Who now can really say what made Pavlova different from Spessivtseva—or, for that matter, from Taglioni or Grisi? The two great classical choreographers of our time, George Balanchine and Frederick Ashton, are still distinct personalities to us, but to future generations they may be as indistinguishable as Coralli and Perrot. The *materia* of ballet is remade by each era's masters; all that survives is a tradition and, when tradition goes, a kind of faith.

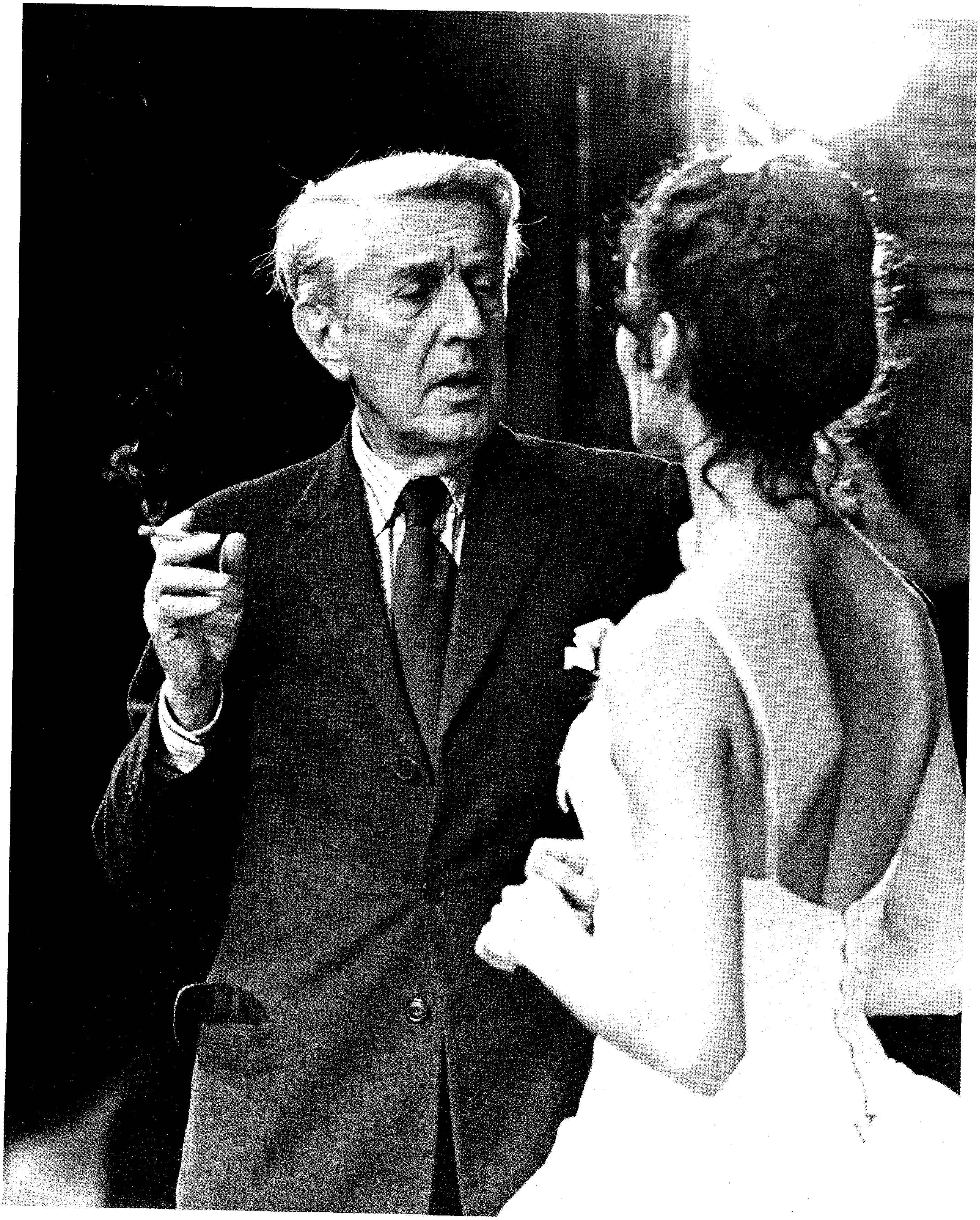
Frederick Ashton died in 1988, five years after Balanchine, his exact contemporary. (Both were born in 1904.) Ashton's fate was harder: he lived to see his works molder and the end come to the company he had helped to create—England's Royal Ballet. Or, rather, he lived to see his classical tradition supplanted by another one, rooted in expressionism, which kept the company going but in the opposite direction. The great virtue of Julie Kavanagh's biography, "Secret Muses: The Life of Frederick Ashton" (Pantheon; $35), is that it is written from within Ashton's tradition. Kavanagh was herself a dancer; she married a dancer; and though she came along dangerously late in Ashton's life and is two generations removed from him, she believed in his kind of ballet—in the classicism that was his dearest dream and the object of his life's struggle. Ashton was continually having to fight the tendency to a Germanic expressionism that eventually conquered the Royal Ballet, but, by fighting ceaselessly on behalf of the purer, the more musical, the more truly English style, he brought the company to a peak of artistry it may never attain again in our lifetime.

It says much for Kavanagh's perspicacity that Ashton's struggle is alive in her book. Relying heavily on interviews and films, she brings us not just the man's struggle but the man himself, in all his complexity and quotability. Crucial to her success is her ability to infer the correct relationship of the Ashton she knew to ballets no longer being danced, or no longer under his supervision. And she got there just in time. Some of her best sources—friends, colleagues, former lovers—had not been interviewed about Ashton before and have since died. Nothing of his personal life had ever got into print; his observers were circumspect. Then, too, they seem to have operated within the same aesthetic constraints that he did, viewing the art as the essence of the life. A statement that Ashton made to an interviewer in 1953, quoted in David Vaughan's "Frederick Ashton and His Ballets," might well have served Kavanagh for an epigraph: "Choreography is my whole being, my whole life, my reason for living. I pour into it all my love, my frustrations, and sometimes autobiographical details. To me, in many ways, it has more reality than the life which I live, and I couldn't conceive of existing unless I could do choreography." Vaughan's book (1977) dealt indispensably with the man and his work from long and direct personal experience, but it was not a biography in the strict sense; neither was the only other book-length study, John Selwyn Gilbert's "Frederick Ashton: A Choreographer and His Ballets" (1971).

Classical art, no matter how self-effacing the artist, cannot go on generating critical studies indefinitely—much less can the art of choreography. This first life of Ashton, as its title indicates, is in the revelatory spirit of current biography—it's the kind of thing that is normally written when an "authorized" or more discreet version has already been done. Kavanagh had Ashton's coöperation, but it wavered, was sometimes grudging, and was even withdrawn at one point. (How their friendship and this temporary rupture came about is told in an Afterword.) He knew the kind of book she would be writing, and finally he let her do it, probably because she fitted the pattern of his world; also, the truth about his personal life fitted ineluctably the pattern of his work. And the truth had better be told now, he must have reasoned on his good days; there is no time for revisionism in dance. In "Secret Muses" the dance epoch now ending coincides with the new candor in biography, to their mutual enhancement. The secrets that are revealed are almost in the nature of a *déformation professionnelle*, so intimately connected are they to Ashton's ability to function creatively. But they will come as a surprise only to those who never saw the ballets.

Which is not to say that Kavanagh's book contains no surprises. The secret muses existed in fact as well as in the romantic fiction of Ashton's imagination. They were the young men he courted, and they were secret mainly because until 1967 homosexuality was illegal in Britain. Ashton, uninhibitedly gay among friends, maintained a public decorum. (When John Gielgud was arrested, in 1953, Ashton's reaction was unsympathetic: "He's ruined it for all of us.") As a performer, he delighted in travesty impersonations—Carabosse in "The Sleeping Beauty," the shy Ugly Sister in "Cinderella," Mrs. Tiggy-Winkle in "The Tales of Beatrix Potter." They were an outlet for his queenship and his gift for parody. A brilliant parlor comedian, he kept people in stitches with his impressions of Ida Rubinstein and Edith Sitwell. The role of imperious dowager suited him, but in sexual matters he was not one to whom others could pay court. Recalling his school days for Kavanagh, he says, "There were people who were in love with me whom I hated, be-

LESLIE E. SPATT



Ashton, who loved men, was as committed to the femininity of the classical tradition as Balanchine, who loved women.

cause I was very romantic, you see, and had the Greek point of view about the Ideal One." He was always the pursuer, never the pursued.

Most of his idols were dancers, and most of them are named in the book. Love letters to and from the choreographer are copiously quoted, and the course of each affair, whether consummated or not, is charted alongside the creation of each ballet, as if the two were interdependent, as, indeed, they were to Ashton. Because of Kavanagh's tact and fluency, the subject of homosexuality never grows oppressive. There is too much buggery in the early chapters, just as there is too much royal name-flinging in the late ones, but the excesses are Ashton's, as he experiences in bohemian London the folly and dissipation necessary to an artist in his twenties, and then, after a half century's faithful service to the crown, hobnobs with the Sandringham set. Where the book distinguishes itself from the academic type of tell-all biography is in its lack of aggression. Kavanagh does not presume to inform us what the ballets are "really" about. She does not claim that they are disguised homosexual fantasies or that the ideal erotic image each of them contains holds any meaning except in Ashton's mind. She does not confuse sexual and erotic energy. She is simply saying that Ashton had to be in love in order to do his best work.

Nothing hinged on its being homosexual love; Balanchine, who was heterosexual, operated artistically the same way Ashton did. That there had to be a "muse"—someone who controlled their affections and for whom the work was made—was the big "secret" of both men's lives. Kavanagh has some conceptual difficulty with the word "muse," applying it to anyone who inspired Ashton, male or female. But it was not by accident that the two greatest choreographers in the world were known as women's choreographers. The fact that Ashton was in love with Margot Fonteyn's partner Michael Somes did not hinder him from making superlative roles for Fonteyn. And Alicia Markova, Pearl Argyle, Svetlana Beriosova, Nadia Nerina, Antoinette Sibley, and Lynn Seymour also had reason to be grateful to him. To me, this says something about the femininity of the classical tradition. Ashton, who loved men, was as committed to it as Balanchine, who loved women. Ashton may have believed that his men inseminated the female in him—this is, in fact, the theme of "Symphonic Variations," the ballet that most people consider his masterpiece—but he served Terpsichore and her alone. Even as he is writing his most ardent and aphrodisiacal love letters to the dancer Dick Beard, the Sadler's Wells company is having to bring in guest choreographers for the male dancers; according to Ninette de Valois, the director, "Fred wasn't interested in the men, he never was. He was principally a woman's choreographer." And he was so by choice as well as by nature. His endorsement of the female principle in "Tiresias" stands, despite the ballet's failure, as a defining moment in his repertory.

Terpsichore came to Ashton in the person of Anna Pavlova, when he was twelve years old. In a key episode, covered by Kavanagh on the very first page of her book, he saw Pavlova dance and was immediately converted. Years later, after he had become a choreographer, he met Pavlova and laid his sword at her feet. He remained obsessed with her for the rest of his life—Kavanagh says he wanted to *be* her. "Every ballerina role he would go on to create was done so in the shadow of his muse. As Margot Fonteyn . . . remarked towards the end of her life, 'I always felt that Fred was seeing Pavlova and that I wasn't living up to her by any means.' " But, of course, Fonteyn was as much Ashton's muse as any living woman could have been. Along with Pavlova, she embodied the image of the ballerina which Ashton cherished, born from the female principle that he found within him. The masculine principle, which he couldn't furnish himself, had to come from outside.

Frederick William Mallandaine Ashton was born in Guayaquil, Ecuador, the youngest of the British vice-consul's four sons, and the prettiest. "I was buggered by all my brothers," he once told a confidant, who, Kavanagh reports, was startled less by the disclosure than by Ashton's matter-of-fact way of making it. To Ashton, the more important thing to know about his childhood was that it was South American. In Lima, Peru, where the family moved when he was three, he was immersed in Spanish-colonial culture. Walking with his half-Inca nurse on the Paseo Colón, he studied the way Peruvian beauties comported themselves in their open carriages. He spoke Spanish fluently and fell headlong for a girl called Panchita—the only woman, he said later, he ever really loved. Not until I read Kavanagh's book, which delves deep into family history, did I realize that Ashton, the architect of English classical style, was born in Ecuador

MRS. EDEN IN TOWN FOR THE DAY

Sorry I'm late. I had to drive *way* out of my
way to pick up coyote piss—
for the garden. We use about a quart a month:
it really does deter the deer.

This man I know at the zoo keeps it for me, for
a group of us, actually:
all gardeners. He happens to *be* a keeper—
of coyotes, hyenas, wolves,

whatever—and he keeps coyote piss as well
(under refrigeration, of course),
sells it right there at the zoo. I hate the long drive,
but I love having no more deer

in the garden. Expensive, too, or should I say
dear, but it's definitely not
a competitive item—where else can you get
coyote piss that's full strength,

not reconstituted from crystals or some kind
of concentrate? It has to be

fresh—from the wild—or the damn deer just ignore it.
I wonder how such merchandise

would be collected? Tom says there's something
they call a Texas catheter,
really not much more than a perforated
condom attached to a bottle . . .

Have you ever seen such goings on at a *zoo*?
Well, neither have I—but of course
I wasn't looking . . . Who would be, unless you *knew* . . .
However he gets hold of it,

it works! Today our keeper told me *human hair*
has the same effect, on most deer—
we could try that. Think how much cheaper, for one thing:
a year's sweepings from Tom's barber

would cost less than a week's gasoline! Even so,
people's hair . . . Better the other:
I wonder which animals would keep off if we tried
our own instead of coyotes'?

moose *dik-dik* *gazelle* *caribou* *hartebeest* *gnu*

—RICHARD HOWARD

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and brought up in Peru, while Fonteyn, the quintessentially English ballerina, had a mother who was half Brazilian (Fontes) and a husband who was Panamanian. Even odder is the fact that in all the years of their collaboration they never made anything of the Latin strain they had in common, apparently regarding it as a given, a resource to be relied upon, never exploited. In 1975, Ashton supplied Fonteyn and David Wall with a *pièce d'occasion*, a pas de deux to music by Villa-Lobos, to be performed in Rio de Janeiro. It was very slight—Fonteyn was well past her prime—and Kavanagh does not even mention it. The only other time Ashton seems to have called directly upon his Latin background was in 1934, in his choreography for the legendary first production of the opera "Four Saints in Three Acts," by Virgil Thomson and Gertrude Stein. As Stein wrote later, "He does know what it is to be a Peruvian, and that made it possible for him to . . . make a religious procession sway and slowly disappear without moving."

Ashton believed that he had inherited his talent from his mother, whom he resembled, and whose girlhood on the farms of Suffolk he memorialized in "La Fille Mal Gardée." His father, a moody, introverted man, who eventually committed suicide, never spoke of his past life in England, or of his first marriage there. In 1948, a son by that marriage revealed to Ashton that their father in his youth had claimed to be the illegitimate offspring of Sir Charles Wentworth Dilke, the liberal politician whose career was destroyed by an adultery scandal in 1885. Ashton investigated, and learned the truth—that George Ashton had been the son of a penurious cabinetmaker—but he preferred to keep it quiet or at least open to question: "My father might have been the son of an aristocrat and a chambermaid, for all I know." When, in his seventies, Ashton began seeing a good deal of the Royal Family, his friends speculated on the exact degree of his snobbery, finally deciding that he was less a snob than a courtier. Though he derided the lower-class origins of David Webster, Covent Garden's general administrator ("that Liverpool department-store manager"), it was because, in the opinion of his good friend Isaiah Berlin, he considered Webster "a vulgarian, coarse and inartistic—all of which was true." To Berlin, Ashton was a kind of court jester:

> He was gay—in every sense—he was charming and had a delicate and extremely sharp wit. He liked society, he had an acute sense of the ridiculous and he told stories with great charm and point, and that pleases society. People like people who amuse them. He was taken up not because he was a wonderful choreographer or a great dancer, but because he was delightful. He sang for his supper and I think he knew this. But he enjoyed the supper very much too.

Ashton was in fact the purest of the Betjeman-Britten type of Renaissance courtier which flourished during the Second World War and the subsequent reign of young Queen Elizabeth. (A photograph of Ashton in seventeenth-century costume for an early ballet, "Capriol Suite," his narrow, long-chinned English face set off by a ruff, to my mind captures his essence.) His close friendship with the Queen Mother was the cause of his breakup with Kavanagh. Her paper had printed an offhand comment that he made to her about the shabbiness of the carpets at Sandringham. That this remark actually gave no offense in the royal household did not matter: the book deal was off. Ashton and the Queen Mother loved to gossip together, tango together, and drink Martinis together. For the benefit of outsiders, he gently mimicked her "little shudder of pleasure as she took the first sip of her gin Martini, one plump hand placed upon her chest." He adopted her royal wave for his curtain calls. Of all the congratulatory messages he received on being given the Order of Merit, hers was the most gratifying to him. Ashton, who could never get over the fact that royal friendships had been bestowed on him, "little Freddie Ashton from Lima, Peru," took his O.M. with utmost seriousness; when the notification came, in 1977, he burst into tears. A dethroned king (in 1970, Webster had, with de Valois's connivance, forced him from the directorship of the ballet), he lived in fear of being forgotten.

The citation was a recognition of fifty years of achievement, a record comparable to Petipa's in Russia and Balanchine's in America, but Ashton, completely untrained in dance until the age of twenty, had had much farther to go than Petipa or Balanchine. He spent his adolescence not at a ballet academy but at Dover College, in England, where Kavanagh depicts him, far from the sunshine of Peru, pining to become a dancer, "a chilblained, miserably displaced public schoolboy." After he left Dover, he worked in London as an office boy, went at night to the theatre, and in 1924 answered an ad offering a trial dance lesson from Léonide Massine. His father's suicide that year had liberated him, but it also landed him with the care of his mother, from whom the lessons had to be kept secret. Even after she became reconciled to the dancing that was reshaping her son's life apart from anything she had ever known, and apart from *her*, Mrs. Ashton continued to live with him. With the family fortune lost, and with no means to begin a new life, she became increasingly dependent. Son and mother were together until she died, in 1939, and were often quite poor.

THE world of ballet at that time had many figures in common with the world of society, and with other worlds—fashion, literature, the arts in general, and that arriviste formation called café society, which no longer exists. Diaghilev had created this coalition in London, as he had in Paris. The two cities were socially so cohesive that when he died they lost no time in forming new ballet ventures, such as the Camargo Society, which brought London's prime movers together in 1930. Its guiding spirit, the economist John Maynard Keynes, was married to the former Diaghilev ballerina Lydia Lopokova. Their union was the symbol of that cultural consensus which, even before the founding of the Camargo Society, enabled Ashton to begin making ballets within two years of having taken his first ballet lesson. Massine had sent him to Marie Rambert's studio, which was the incubator of British ballet. Ashton wanted only to dance; he had to be pushed into becoming a choreographer—by Rambert at first, and then by de Valois and Constant Lambert. They were the visionaries, and their sights were focussed on a national dance theatre. Ashton went along the path they marked out for him. Lucky he did. In a few years, Diaghilev would be dead, and the dispersal of his aides and choreographers might have done Ashton out of the job he was meant to have. (The launching of the Camargo Society was attended by Balanchine and Boris Kochno.)

By the age of thirty, Ashton had become a master of ballets that reflected the social scene he was part of—lightweight stuff about lords and ladies and escapades among the gods, frivolous West End revues, elegant vaudevilles like "Façade," spirited imitations of Balanchine like "Les Rendezvous." Kavanagh is good on the ballets, and she is better on the social scene. A sprawly, sometimes untidy writer with a tendency to overquote the reviewers (including this reviewer), she is also uncommonly ambidextrous, a Nancy Mitford of ballet, mingling gossip, social history, and critical commentary. London in the twenties and thirties—Mitford's era—is re-created from personal accounts rendered at first hand, not mined from books, and Kavanagh has read the books, too. Whether her milieu is Mayfair, Notting Hill Gate, or the heart of old Bloomsbury, the pages sparkle.

The cast of characters includes Sophie Fedorovitch, the scenic designer, who lived in one room and slept in a reclining chair; Olivia Wyndham, who gave parties dense with absinthe and cocaine; Dorothy Todd and Madge Garland, the editors of British *Vogue* and the reigning tastemakers in matters of fashion and sex. "Just as people are called fag-hags now," Ashton told Kavanagh, "I used to be escort to a host of lesbians." The photographer Barbara Ker-Seymer, who was then a painter, liked Ashton because she could behave freely with him, without the reserve expected by "normal" men. "With the young men we knew, our mothers would say, 'Don't you think so-and-so is being rather familiar?' if he took your arm. But of course we all took each other's arms and kissed each other. When you're a dancer, there's no difference between the sexes. And the same with artists, we were the same."

Ashton also attracted women who wanted to marry him. One of Kavanagh's nuggets is Rose Paget, hopelessly tall for a dancer and hopelessly in love with Ashton. She was a marquess's daughter and a duke's granddaughter; her aunt was Lady Diana Cooper, the sometime actress, and another symbol of the age's interlocking worlds. Rose Paget had no illusions about Ashton's sexual nature, and she wanted him to have her money. Marriage to her would have been the salvation of him and his mother, but although he could be aroused by the beauty of women—in the mid-thirties, Kavanagh says, he was "swinging both ways with the regularity of a metronome"—he did not take Rose Paget seriously. Nor did he respond in a more than token fashion to the advances of Alice von Hofmannsthal, Rose's more artful and determined rival. Alice, with her Astor millions, was one of the richest women in the world, and one of the most mixed up. Her vicissitudes punctuate the story of Ashton's life like a series of catastrophic explosions in the distance. Rose Paget was unfortunate; Alice von Whoever was tragic. Spurned by Ashton, she married or cohabited again and again, adopting each time the preoccupation of her husband or lover. (Philip Harding was a Communist, so she became one, too.) Through it all, she remained faithful to Ashton by becoming an outstanding patron of ballet, both in London and in New York. Their lifelong friendship was shattered by her mysterious death, in 1956.

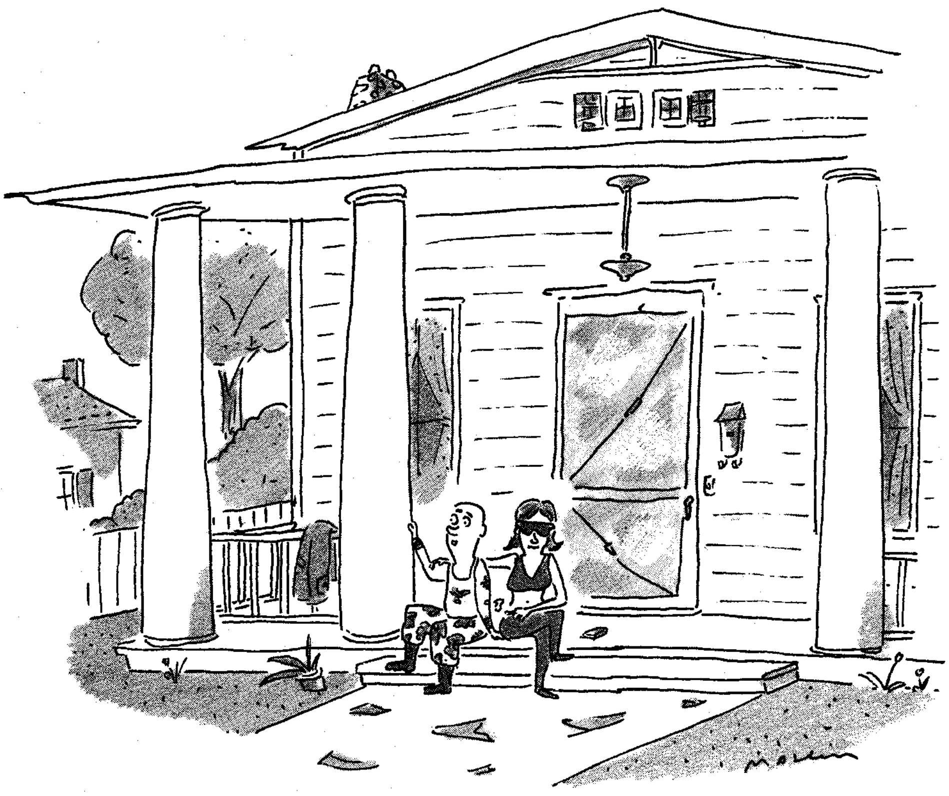
David Pleydell-Bouverie, because he sponged off Alice and mistreated her, is one of only two people whom Kavanagh regards with scorn. The other is Robert Helpmann, notwithstanding his talent as an actor and mime. Helpmann's monstrous egotism brought out the querulous, hysterical streak in Ashton, and, while Kavanagh recognizes that their backbiting and rivalizing "fuelled their most famous interpretations," in "Cinderella," and "helped to generate a masterpiece," "Symphonic Variations," she basically doesn't enjoy the spectacle of their backstage relationship and blames Helpmann for it. The side of Ashton's homosexuality that she responds to is the erotic side—the passionate, anguished, vulnerable side of Ashton in love.

At the same time that Ashton was being pursued by importunate women, he was pursuing the elusive young Michael Somes. An Adonis even by ballet standards, Somes was, as it turned out, not very gay and not very kind. He kept Ashton palpitating while he himself sought out young women. His romance with the dancer Pamela May broke Ashton's heart. But, as Kavanagh points out repeatedly, Ashton needed to be brokenhearted: the drama of unfulfilled desire stimulated his imagination as did nothing else, and he chased unattainable men all his life. Somes was not the first, although he may have been the one whose unattainability brought Ashton his first large experience of creative frustration. Out of unrequited passion for Somes came the choreographer's greatest period of growth, the decade beginning with "Le Baiser de la Fée," in 1935, interrupted by the war, and crowned by the première of "Symphonic Variations," in 1946.

During this period, the frivolity vanished from Ashton's life and from his world. His mother's death, the war, and Somes combined to create in him a more sombre outlook and sense of responsibility. Just as he was beginning to explore the metaphysical side of ballet—the only choreographer apart from Balanchine to do so—the war broke out, and he was inducted into the Royal Air Force, at the age of thirty-six. Ashton's military service brought him frustration of a different sort. As an intelligence officer who "didn't know

PRUDENCE PENN

Ashton, top right, standing next to his lovers the dancer Alexander Grant (left) and the decorator Martyn Thomas, with the family and friends of Princess Margaret, seated center. Ashton could never get over the fact that royal friendships had been bestowed on him.



"Ah, spring—when a young skinhead's fancy turns to kicking ass."

the front from the back of an [English] aeroplane—let alone a German one," Ashton was forced to while away the war, dreaming of ballets he couldn't stage, agonized at the thought of Helpmann, who had escaped the draft, getting to be the mainstay of the Sadler's Wells, instituting changes, even daring to choreograph.

Ashton's return to power after the war, the restoration of the opera house at Covent Garden, with the Sadler's Wells company taking up residency there, and the opening performance of "The Sleeping Beauty" (broadcast on the *radio*) have been enshrined among the ballet legends of our time, along with the company's glowing New York début, three years later. Behind these events lies the curious tale of Ashton's infatuation with Dick Beard, a young American dancer with Ballet Theatre. During that company's London season in 1946, Ashton spotted Beard in the corps of "Pillar of Fire," the Antony Tudor ballet starring Nora Kaye. He mentioned Beard to Kaye, and Kaye, who thought Ashton the world's preëminent ballet genius (where this left Tudor, the creator of Kaye's greatest roles and at one time Ashton's most formidable competitor, is a question worth pondering), agreed to be his go-between. Kaye not only worshipped Ashton's genius; she was in love with him. This love of hers, she wrote him from New York, "will very likely be the great tragedy of my life. And as I am resigned at last to the inevitability of unrequited frustration, I am campaigning to at least make your life a full one. I am very chummy with Dick at this point and have talked him into the 'wonder' of you—a sacrifice, for I fully realize the outcome."

The lengths to which Kaye was willing to go in order to perform her sacrificial service of maneuvering Beard into Ashton's clutches are no less remarkable than Ashton's calculating use of her—and of Beard, then only twenty. This entire Jamesian episode is narrated by Kavanagh with the help of the Ashton-Beard letters, which lay bare Ashton's seduction strategy in all its aspects—charming, desperate, devious, full of rococo appeals to glorious youth from desiccated middle age. Ashton is firing up his creative engines. It is not surprising to learn that among the ballets of this fertile period, running from the "Valses Nobles et Sentimentales," which he dedicated to Beard, through "Scènes de Ballet" and "Cinderella," to "Illuminations" (done for New York City Ballet, where Beard had landed), there was a "Don Juan," short-lived and, according to reviewers, strangely unemotional. Ashton may have known himself to be a cold-blooded Don. Though the temperature of the letters themselves is not cold, he performs so many verbal acrobatics and indulges so many conceits (Kavanagh compares him to an Elizabethan sonneteer) that one almost suspects him of keeping up the correspondence for its own sake—for the feelings it releases and the images it engenders. Beard's absence in New York lets Ashton idealize him to the point of idolatry, yet there is always a fine duplicitous edge to Ashton's fancies:

> You live now in my imagination, absorbing it and though you are miles away you are always with me. As I create my new ballet you are at my side, encouraging, dissuading what is wrong, approving what is good (I hope) and when we return to my little room you are tender to me and loving, for I am tired and preoccupied and I feel that flow of your affection and you refresh me.

Not since Adolphe Menjou's pitch to Ginger Rogers in "Stage Door" ("I'm just a tired little boy with a dream") has there been such self-regarding tosh; it flatters the man who writes it as much as the boy who reads it. But Ashton's letters are also prime documents of the artist's craving for an erotic attachment, an anchoring in the real world which will validate his efforts and make them all the more real to him. Kavanagh calls this a need for creative complicity. Whether it was actually satisfied by the men to whom Ashton gave his trust, and whether it could ever have been satisfied to the extent that Ashton wanted, matters less than Ashton's faith in its possibilities. It was this faith that kept him working.

And it was, at bottom, indistinguishable from religious faith. Out of God's creation, the beautiful man, comes the beauty of art. Ashton writes to Beard, "I think that it is so wonderful that you who are so beautiful want to use your beauty to make more beauty to inspire beauty and spread beauty from out of your being." Ashton never married, never lived with any of his loves. It was, I think, because he could profit more from the poetic vision than from the all too prosaic reality. He didn't mind their looking after him; in fact, he required it. (His favorite song was "Someone to Watch Over Me.") But the marriage contracts he longed most to sign had an escape clause—for them, not for him. What he could not possess, because it remained immanent in nature, he loved all the more.

Just as Dick Beard didn't need to be physically present in order to inspire Ashton, other men didn't need to be dancers. When I said that the existence of the secret muses would surprise no one who knew the ballets, I meant that one could tell from the choreography for Somes or Alexander Grant that Ashton was mad about the boy—and about boys in general. I would not, though, have suspected Brian Shaw; his short, chunky physique was not what one thought of as Ashtonian, and on the stage he wasn't sexy. Nor would there have been any way of knowing about the chemistry student (1960-64)—even Grant didn't know about him—or the interior decorator (1965-86), although the latter's influence was the most lasting and intrusive of Ashton's life. Intrusive because, unlike Balanchine's late passion, Suzanne Farrell, the interior decorator, Martyn Thomas, had no real business in Ashton's professional life or, indeed, in ballet. Kavanagh writes, "Some colleagues were alarmed by Thomas's increasing power over Ashton, and it was not only pillow talk about castings that caused concern. This confident, freespirited young man, in shocking-pink trousers and Mr. Fish shirts—a living emblem of the Swinging Sixties—was now influencing the ballets themselves."

It must be said that by this time Ashton's creativity was on the wane. Despite Kavanagh's assertion that "Martyn Thomas was a lifeforce whose influence in the final phase of [Ashton's] career proved as intoxicating and rejuvenating as Nureyev's had been for Fonteyn," only one great ballet remained for Ashton to create after 1966—"Enigma Variations." I cannot make the claims for "A Month in the Country" that Kavanagh does, or for "Marguerite and Armand," the Fonteyn-Nureyev vehicle that was a big popular hit in 1963. First of all, both works are adapted from plays and not from music (unlike "The Dream," adapted from "A Midsummer Night's Dream," which was a play with music). They take their chief interest from their subject matter, something that Ashton himself had warned against: "Since when are 'subjects' the all-important matter of works of art. [You] may as well say Chardin was a bad artist because he painted cabbages." Ashton's cabbages are the tender trifles, like "The Two Pigeons," on which he lavished some of his most felicitous invention, and the abstract ballets that he made in the

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teeth of Ninette de Valois's objection that abstraction was "a bore": "Symphonics," "Scènes de Ballet," and "Monotones"—ballets in which subject matter is totally dissolved in form, and his art is at its purest.

But even when the ballets are not abstract they have a life of their own which discourages us from reading the plot summaries in the printed program or wanting to know about the choreographer's private life. We do not refrain from "reading" a ballet because it is wrong; we refrain because it is futile. Kavanagh gets the matter exactly right in a reflective passage that goes to the heart of her book: "Does the knowledge that the Young Girl in 'The Two Pigeons' is a reincarnation of the male chemistry student with whom [Ashton] was infatuated really add a valuable new dimension to the ballet's achingly sweet reconciliation duet? If anything, it is a distraction, diminishing the work's power of suggestion, the raison d'être of dance." The extent to which Kavanagh *can* draw on inside knowledge in "Marguerite and Armand" and "A Month in the Country" without distracting us from Ashton's intention is the extent to which the raison d'être of dance is missing in these works, leaving them little more than effective pieces of theatre. "Marguerite and Armand" (from "Camille") functions as a dance transcription of the effective piece of theatre it was to begin with, but "A Month in the Country" is an actual reduction. It does no harm to the ballet that Ashton made of Turgenev's play to suggest that Natasha is "really" Ashton himself. And I now understand why Anthony Dowell, whose role is the best thing in the ballet, had to appear as a blond—because Martyn Thomas had bleached his hair. Kavanagh even points out how Ashton manipulated Turgenev's characters to tighten the correspondences that *he* found between the play and his life. Like "Robert Schumann's 'Davidsbündlertänze,' " a less than major but a key Balanchine work, Ashton's "A Month in the Country" is thinly disguised autobiography. Significantly, both masters waited until the end of their lives before attempting such a thing.

"Enigma Variations" (which may, as a turnabout, have influenced "Davidsbündlertänze") is about the loneliness of Elgar. Isn't it also disguised autobiography? I would say no, or no more than that other depiction of the artist's life "Le Baiser de la Fée," which Balanchine also choreographed in the thirties. If it is true, as Kavanagh says, that the affinity between Ashton and Elgar is profound, the affinity between Ashton and Balanchine is more so. Kavanagh underplays it, but her book revealed it to me and forced me to think it through.

Although Ashton was the younger man by only eight months, he seems to have studied Balanchine's work and learned more from it (and perhaps also from Balanchine's life) than anyone else ever did. He never acknowledged a debt—his obeisances were made to Nijinska. Balanchine's superiority came to be a sore point with Ashton. Kavanagh relegates to a footnote the review he wrote in 1964 of Bernard Taper's biography of Balanchine:

> George Balanchine, a contemporary and colleague of mine, is the choreographer I most admire in the world. Balanchine has had all the necessary environment and background for the making of the great choreographer that he is. Unlike myself, who had to make all my opportunities from the beginning, and fight my way against every kind of prejudice, in order to be allowed to dance. He started as a child in the Maryinsky School where he received the best available tuition. He came from a musical family and all the Russian fairies must have gathered at his christening to bestow on him all his great gifts.

This Salieri-like tone of envy, so unworthy of Ashton, can only be understood in the context of the ballet controversies of the era. The debate over who was greater, Ashton or Balanchine, raged in New York as it never did in London. The London audience underrated Ashton, but it disdained Balanchine and New York City Ballet until the very last years of Balanchine's life. The New York audience, on the other hand, swept up Ashton and the Sadler's Wells / Royal Ballet as if they were conquering heroes. Balanchine's company was considered dowdy, Balanchine himself an eccentric. However, as Ashton was well aware, higher opinion in New York (I do not mean the press) was all pro-Balanchine.

Besides this, the two men were not good friends—choreographers never are, probably because they are self-taught craftsmen, unable to accept each other's way of doing things. I cannot believe that Balanchine ever thought Ashton unprofessional, as someone in Kavanagh's book says, but that he frowned on Ashton's weakness for camp and his inability to read music I can believe. One sometimes hears it said that the Royal Ballet would

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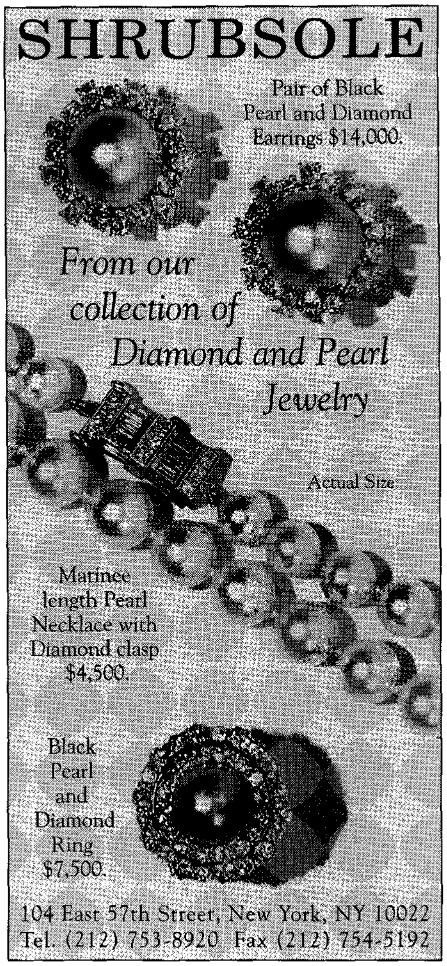
be a stronger company today if Ashton had gone into the classroom and taught, as Balanchine did. This ignores the decline of Balanchine's own company, and, besides, Ashton probably thought that he didn't know enough to teach. (Jacques d'Amboise, when asked by Kavanagh to compare the two choreographers' methods of working, said, "Balanchine gave us a count and a step for every note. Fred didn't give steps, he gave ideas—he would say to me, '*Swirl!*' and Balanchine would say, '*Chaîné.*' ") That Ashton was as successful as he probably puzzled and rankled Balanchine; he may also have realized how much he had contributed to Ashton's artistic persona. He once told Ashton, in front of Tanaquil LeClercq, that there was one thing he, Balanchine, had learned from him. LeClercq expected it to be something about choreography or the management of ballerinas—or even rose growing, which the two men had in common. But Balanchine only said, "You taught me always to pile up the dinner dishes in the sink and run water over them before your charwoman arrived."

That both men were women's choreographers was probably another source of friction. It is dumbfounding today to think that this bias was held against them; it could only have been considered a problem in an era when male dancers were scarce and in need of special attention. And it isn't really true that Ashton and Balanchine weren't interested in men. Ashton believed, with Auden, that action was the name of the masculine principle, and many of the roles he created for men had precisely that quality, especially when the men had strong technique. It's as if he wished to characterize the condition of virtuosity rather than leave it a blank for the virtuoso to fill, as Balanchine would have done. I also found Ashton's roles for women a little too high-pitched in allegro. Again, character color appeared where Balanchine would have been transparent. Ashton's pigment was more tainted than Balanchine's, his sense of style more obtrusive. But the biggest difference between the two choreographers was the emphasis that Ashton gave to the female upper body and Balanchine to the lower. Balanchine thought that a woman's expressive power was mainly in her legs and pelvis, Ashton in her head, upper back, and shoulders (those Peruvian women in their carriages). This, more than any use or nonuse of men, betrayed their sexual orientation.

Both men believed in ballet as a vision of transcendence. For the sake of this vision, both would undergo tortures of sublimation. But Balanchine attempted the vision continually, Ashton only sporadically. Both men were initiated into the glory and mystery of ritual in their childhoods—Balanchine in the Russian Orthodox Church, Ashton in the Lima cathedral, where he was taken by his nurse, and where as an altar boy he later served Mass. Though not a Catholic, he faithfully lit a candle in the Brompton Oratory at the start of work on every ballet. My own favorite Ashton ballets are the divine Satie trios, "Monotones," and the two pastorals, "La Fille Mal Gardée" and "Enigma Variations," one comic, the other elegiac. Absolute desert-island favorite: "Fille," with its ribbon-woven, lovers'-knot choreography. In the midst of a sunny rustic comedy, Ashton finds a place for ritual.

Kavanagh names the United States as "the country he loved more than any other and which he felt loved him as much in return." The second part of that sentence is the more plausible. Ashton would never have left England once it became clear to him how indispensable he was to the development of a national ballet and how seriously it was threatened by the war. By the end of the thirties, his fate was sealed. He did not join the gay evacuees Tudor and Laing, branded traitors by the British, along with Auden and Isherwood. Somes's statement that Ashton "was as patriotic to his company as he was to his country" rests on evidence that can be found in the art as well as in the life. England nurtured Ashton; in its salubrious resistance to his efforts he found the counterpart to sweet adversity in love. Having to court recalcitrant publics was the making of both Ashton and Balanchine; feeling underappreciated drove them deeper into their art.

When I first began attending ballet performances, I was struck by the gulf that existed between what was said by knowledgeable people during intermission and what was said in print. The tendency now in all the arts to bridge that gulf is not altogether a good thing. In place of hypocrisy, we have the new Philistinism that equates privileged information with revelation. "Secret Muses" is a corrective: it takes inflammable personal material and recomposes it into the justly proportioned commonsensical stuff of legitimate biography. ♦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BOOKS

THE IRONY AND THE ECSTASY

Philip Roth and the Jewish Atlantis.

BY LOUIS MENAND

PHILIP ROTH'S new book is a historical novel about the period from the Second World War to Watergate. The hero is a high-school sports star and ex-marine who marries the Miss New Jersey of 1949, takes over his father's business, buys a big house in the country, and becomes a prosperous, liberal, post-ethnic mid-century American. He has what he thinks is the perfect life. What do you imagine happens to it? The novel is called "American Pastoral" (Houghton Mifflin; $26), and no reader of Roth's fiction is likely to miss a guess about the way a story with a title like that is going to turn out. But what makes the book difficult and disturbing—what makes it great—is that although the outcome is foreclosed, the moral is not. This is a four-hundred-page novel that ends with a question mark.

High-school athlete, successful businessman, and the postwar experience all suggest a comparison with John Updike's Rabbit novels. But the Rabbit books are not historical novels. They are chronicles. Rabbit is a device for boring through the dead center of four decades of American life. He is the kind of person who takes things as they come, so recording what happens to him is a way of recording what happened. His life is an accident of history, like everyone's life, but it's a series of scrapes and fender benders, not a head-on collision.

Historical novels are about head-on collisions. They are about people who get blindsided by change, people who get caught between what's going and what's coming. There doesn't even have to be very much "history" in them. They are not obliged to make references to passing events and passing fashions, to bobby socks and astronauts and hula hoops. They don't chronicle history; they condense it. Roth's novel spans (as they say) four decades, but almost a third of it takes place during a rather aimless dinner party on a late-summer evening in 1973. The climax involves a drunken middle-aged woman stabbing a retired Jewish businessman in the face with a fork. It's the fall of Troy.

The man whose life becomes a wick for history's flame is one of two brothers in a Jewish family from the Weequahic section of Newark. This does not make him unusual. With a single exception, the principal character in every book that Philip Roth has written since 1979 is one of two brothers in a Jewish family from the Weequahic section of Newark. In four of those books ("The Ghost Writer," "Zuckerman Unbound," "The Anatomy Lesson," and "The Counterlife"), the man is called Nathan Zuckerman. In one of them ("Deception"), he is called Philip. In one of them ("Operation Shylock"), he is called Philip Roth. In two of them ("The Facts," an autobiography, and "Patrimony," a memoir), he *is* Philip Roth. The single exception is "Sabbath's Theater," the book published just before this one; its protagonist, Mickey Sabbath, is different from these other characters only in coming from a differently named New Jersey Jewish community.

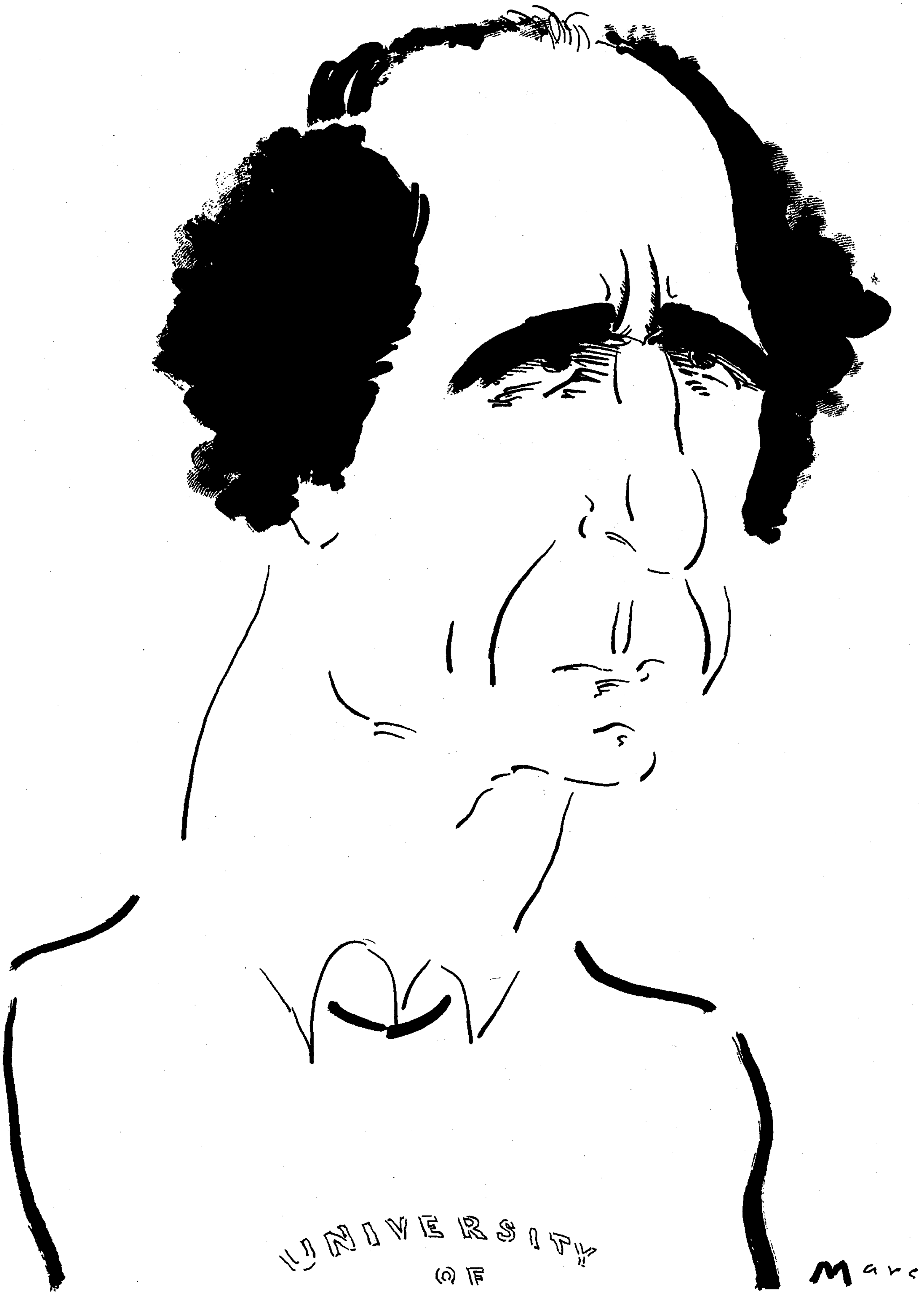
This time his name is Seymour Levov, and what does make him unusual is that he is temperamentally pretty much everything Mickey Sabbath, Nathan Zuckerman, Philip, and (as far as one can tell) Philip Roth are not: slow to anger, nonjudgmental, unself-absorbed, libidinally well-adjusted, and irony-free. His personality seems to move so frictionlessly within the world's groove, what he wants and does seems so congruent with social expectations about wanting and doing, that he might be mistaken for a conformist. But he is not a conformist; that's just the way he is formed.

The narrator of Seymour Levov's story is Nathan Zuckerman. This may not strike every reader as an added attraction. Zuckerman is, of course, the alter ego Roth invented for "The Ghost Writer," and his presence (like the presence of the character named Philip Roth) usually signals an elaborate game of Find Philip. Zuckerman is the Roth who is not Roth. He is Roth impersonating himself and daring his readers to guess which part is the fact and which part is the act. The general idea seems to be that there is an absolute distinction (which is probably true) but that we will never get it right (which is also probably true, but which can become a little annoying). Most of the books after "The Ghost Writer," and particularly "The Counterlife," "Deception," and "Operation Shylock," are like tops that have "life" pasted on one side and "fiction" pasted on the other, and which the writer tries to get spinning fast enough to make us dizzy.

This does not seem the narrative strategy best suited to the story of Seymour Levov. But the Zuckerman who appears in the opening pages of "American Pastoral" is a changed Zuckerman. He has, he explains, undergone prostate surgery, and this has left him impotent, incontinent, and considerably mellowed. He is more reflective, less spiky, more sympathetic to the trials of lesser mortals—Zuckerman unwound. And his attitude toward the distinction between life and fiction has altered, too. He no longer, in telling the story of Seymour Levov, wants to make our heads spin. He now wants to get it right.

The reason he gives is a novelist's reason: he wants to see if he can imagine the inner life of someone who seems so radically unlike him. Seymour is an ontologically seamless specimen, a person blessed by some supernatural power with the gift of naturalness. "Where was the Jew in him?" Zuckerman wonders. "No striving, no ambivalence, no doubleness—just the style, the natural physical refinement of a star. . . . What did he do for subjectivity?" This is the sort of question, he says, that novelists write in order to answer.

There is another reason for Zuckerman's interest in Seymour Levov, though, and that is that Seymour is a figure plucked from Zuckerman's own imagination. It is not Seymour's apparent un-Jewishness that makes him fascinating. It's what Zuckerman calls "his unconscious oneness with America." He is a symbol of the belief that growing up Jewish in Newark was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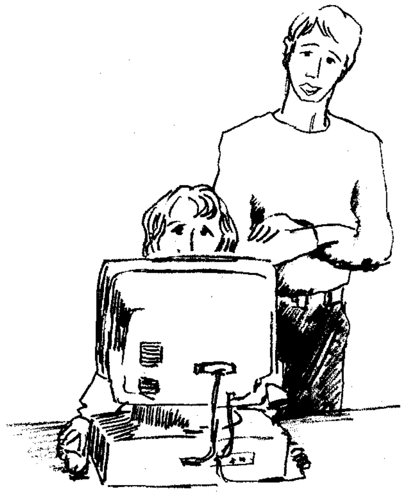

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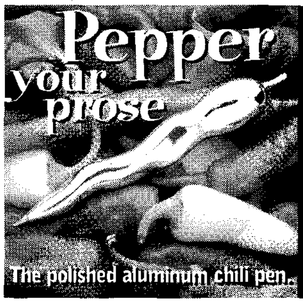

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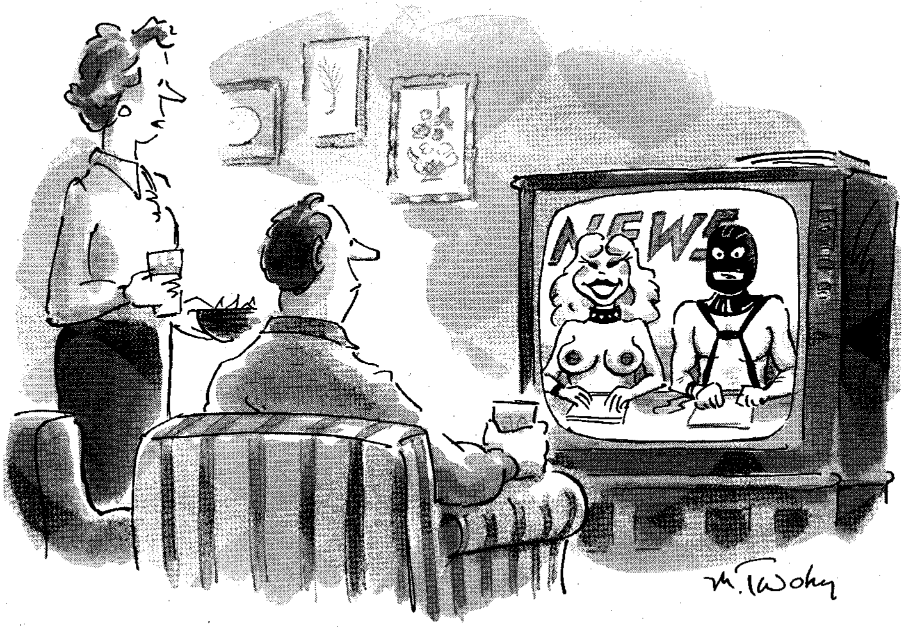

"Must be sweeps month."

• •

(as Roth himself puts it in "The Facts") indistinguishable from growing up American. He represents the success of the American Jewish experiment, and if something has gone wrong with his life Zuckerman needs to understand why, because the belief that the American Jewish experiment is a success, the belief that someone like Seymour Levov could have whatever life he dreamed of having, is an essential element in Zuckerman's understanding of himself.

Seymour was five years ahead of Zuckerman at Weequahic High School, back in the nineteen-forties, when he had already acquired symbolic status. He was a star in three sports, a kind of neighborhood god, the cynosure of the community at a time when many of its sons had gone off to war. His successes on the playing field became transformed into communal experiences of ordeal and triumph. "Our entire neighborhood's wartime hope," Zuckerman says, "seemed to converge in the marvelous body of the Swede."

Seymour is called the Swede because he is tall and fair-haired and blue-eyed, but the name sticks because he is also cool and deferential and self-possessed. He seems to be the best Jewish son imaginable and at the same time to answer to the stereotype of an entirely different ethnic group. His father has built up a successful business, in downtown Newark, manufacturing ladies' gloves, and after serving in the Marines Seymour attends Upsala College, marries Dawn Dwyer, an Irish-American girl who has competed in the Miss America pageant, and turns down an offer to join a baseball Giants' farm team in order to learn the glove business. He buys his big house in a quaint little community named Old Rimrock out in the New Jersey countryside, his wife starts breeding beef cattle just for the honest hardworking fun of it, and they have a daughter named Merry.

That is more or less as much as Zuckerman knows until he runs into Seymour's younger brother, Jerry, at their forty-fifth high-school reunion and learns that Seymour has just died, and that much of his life was miserable because in 1968 sixteen-year-old Merry Levov, as an act of antiwar protest, had set off a bomb in the Old Rimrock post office, killing a local doctor, and had then gone underground. Seymour and Dawn eventually divorced, the house was sold, and the glove business was moved to Puerto Rico, unable to make it in the inner city in the aftermath of the Newark riots.

Zuckerman is startled by this news, because he had had dinner with Seymour in New York only a couple of months earlier and had guessed none of it—not even that Seymour was dying. Seymour had projected the same stirring and exasperating image of at-homeness with himself and his life that Zuckerman remembered from high school. Zuckerman had never imagined that he was broken inside. Novelists are supposed to intuit these things; his professional pride is a little wounded. Stimulated by Jerry's revelations, and swooning a little under the influence of heavy reunion nostalgia, Zuckerman begins to imagine how it all happened—how the gods managed to preserve Seymour's perfect façade while reducing the inner core to ashes. What he imagines is the novel we read.

The style of "American Pastoral" is very different from the style of most of the books Roth has published since "Portnoy's Complaint." It is closest to "Patrimony" and to the Roth section (as opposed to the Zuckerman section) of "The Facts"; that is, it is eloquent and evocative but very tightly controlled. In imagining Seymour's life, Zuckerman reimagines the whole lost world of Jewish Newark—the neighborhood, the families, the small businesses and factories. We learn a great deal about the history and process of glove manufacture. There is an extended account of Dawn's experiences at the Miss America pageant of 1949 which incorporates a re-creation of the old Atlantic City:

> Together with the chaperones, they visited the Steel Pier and had a fish dinner at Captain Starn's famous seafood restaurant and yacht bar, and a steak dinner at Jack Guischard's Steak House, and the third morning they had their picture taken together in front of Convention Hall, where a pageant official told them the picture was one they would treasure for the rest of their lives . . . that the friendships they were making would last the rest of their lives, that when the time arrived they would name their children after one another—and meanwhile, when the papers came out in the morning, the girls said to their chaperones, "Oh God, I'm not in this. Oh God, this one looks like she's going to win."

The periods often swell in this way, and the prose sometimes allows itself to grow faintly elegiac; but the writing is always measured and always sober. This is not a funny book.

The reason has partly to do with the reflective wanness of the post-prostate Zuckerman, and partly with the circumstance that most of the characters the story has to deal with are not the usual Roth inventions. The usual Roth inventions are not wan or reflective types. They are people who have no problem with the way they are—not the slightest problem in the world, except for maybe one little problem, one tiny thing that might be bugging them, which is the possibility that *you* might be having a problem with the way they are, in which case they are happy to explain at whatever length might be necessary why it is, given the way the

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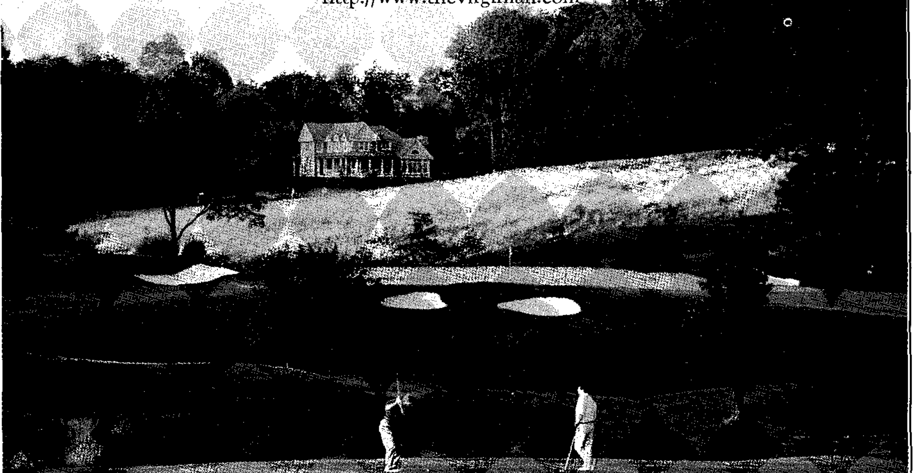

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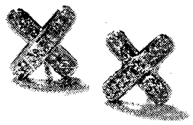

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universe happens to be constructed, that you are wrong. They are characters who are capable, at the slightest provocation, of launching into voluminous comic monologues of self-justification, enormous speeches that rise to astonishing imaginative heights on the hot air of their own righteousness: characters like Mickey Sabbath, in "Sabbath's Theater," Moishe Pipik (the fake Philip Roth), in "Operation Shylock," Nathan Zuckerman, in "The Counterlife" and "The Anatomy Lesson," Alvin Pepler, in "Zuckerman Unbound," all the way back to the father of them all, the divinely inspired Alexander Portnoy. It is an emotion Roth loves, this emotion of being completely in the right and fired by the need to straighten out every dimwit who persists in getting it wrong; and he is always searching for an excuse to impersonate someone in its throes.

There are only two sustained moments like this in "American Pastoral." They both come on the novel's climactic day, in the late summer of 1973, which is the day Seymour discovers Merry, five years after she has gone underground, living by herself in a hellhole in downtown Newark. After the Old Rimrock bombing, Seymour learns, his daughter has set off several more bombs, killing three more people. Now she is a fanatical Jain, wearing a cutoff stocking over her mouth to avoid harming airborne microörganisms, never washing herself, scarcely eating. She is rational, articulate, self-possessed, and a complete lunatic. Her smell is so foul that when Seymour gets close to her he vomits. But she refuses to come home with him, and he cannot bring himself to force her.

Miserable and terrified, Seymour calls his brother Jerry, now a big-shot cardiac surgeon in Miami, and Jerry's crushing diatribe against Seymour's pusillanimity is the first of the true Rothian monologues in this book. He finally has the chance to explain why his hero older brother has got everything completely wrong:

> You wanted Miss America? Well, you've got her, with a vengeance—she's your daughter! You wanted to be a real American jock, a real American marine, a real American hotshot with a beautiful Gentile babe on your arm? You longed to belong like everybody else to the United States of America? Well, you do now, big boy, thanks to your daughter. The reality of this place is right up in your kisser now. With the help of your daughter you're as deep in the shit as a man can get, the real American crazy shit. America amok! America amuck!

And he's only getting warmed up.

The other familiar monologue comes later that day, at the dinner party, during which Seymour learns of the additional perfidies of his wife, his neighbors, and his friends, while his father—old Lou Levov, the retired glove manufacturer—amuses the bland and unshockable gentry with an extended rant about Richard Nixon, the blacks, and "Deep Throat." "You'd be surprised," one of the guests patiently explains to this old relic of rectitude during a discussion of whether kids should be allowed to see "Deep Throat," "how much the kids today have learned to take in their stride." Lou replies, "But degrading things should *not* be taken in their stride! I say *lock* them in their rooms if they take this in their stride! I remember when kids used to be at home doing their homework and not out seeing movies like this. This is the morality of a country that we're talking about. Well, isn't it? Am I nuts? It is an affront to decency and to decent people." He's just getting started, too. These are brilliant splenetic irruptions, injections of raw vitality into a novel otherwise modulated, sympathetic, and restrained—a novel otherwise designed to mimic the personality of its protagonist.

So what did go wrong in the life of Seymour Levov? Different readers will arrive at different conclusions. It's a complex book, and the variety of possible readings is one of the reasons it is so effective. Still, it's so different in tone from most of Roth's other books that it is sometimes a little hard to know how to decode it, a little hard to know where the irony lies and in which direction it points. Faintly elegiac re-creations of Miss America pageants are not among Roth's customary forms of literary exercise. And a writer who once created a character based on himself for the purpose of lecturing readers on the fallacy of confusing characters with their authors is not, after all, a writer to be trusted too quickly.

You can find yourself, while reading "American Pastoral," starting to wonder whether the book might not be in fact just a pastiche of Updike, with those meticulous descriptions of glovemaking and

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cattle-breeding, the quaint village post office and general store, the suburban dinner parties, and the flora and the fauna and the endless Americana. At other moments, you can begin to suspect that the novel must be ironic all the way through—that Seymour Levov, with the prize cattle and the beauty-queen wife and the house made of stones from a Revolutionary War campsite, is an absurdity from the start, a bubble of assimilationist fantasy bound to burst, and that Zuckerman has plunged headlong into this nonsense but Roth has not. The high point of Roth's last novel, "Sabbath's Theater," was the hilarious desecration of the apartment of Sabbath's old friend and business associate, a successful theatrical producer whose well-ordered existence of civility and good taste the libidinal whirlwind of Mickey Sabbath lays waste to in a little over twenty-four hours. Mickey Sabbath would not have needed even a day with the Levovs.

By the middle of the great dinner-party scene, though, these suspicions have faded away, for you feel that Roth is finally getting down to what is eating him. The guests at the party, apart from the senior Levovs, are affluent professionals, social and generational peers of Seymour and his wife—an architect, an academic couple, a therapist, a family physician. They are antiwar liberals, environmentalists, people tolerant of dissent, of pornography—of everything, really, because they are so snug inside the cocoon of post-scarcity, post-ethnic, postwar upper-middle-class American life. They are right-thinking, cultured, and successful, and they are morally spineless. The exposure of their inner decay is relentless, but Roth overplays nothing. It is a withering scene.

"American Pastoral" can be read as generically advertised—that is, as a story of Arcadian bliss into which the serpent inexorably creeps. It can be read as an American Book of Job, a story of undeserved suffering and the fickleness of fate. It can be read as political allegory—a story of how the spirit born out of the victory over Fascism was destroyed by Vietnam and Watergate. But at bottom it seems to be a book about the same thing that almost all of Roth's books are about: the life—the aspirations, the pride, the accomplishment—of the vanished world of Weequahic, the Jewish Atlantis. The recollection of that buried life was the heart of "Sabbath's Theater"; it was the heart of "Patrimony," too—Roth's memorial to his father. With a

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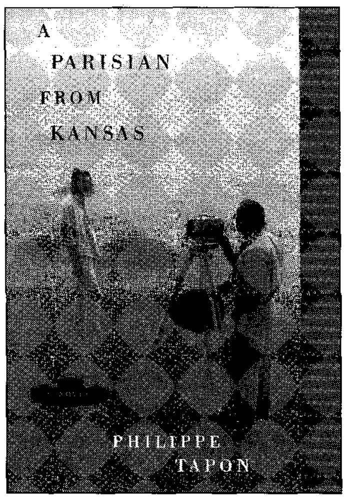

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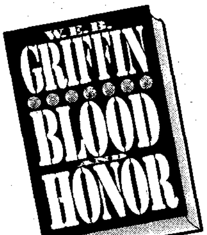

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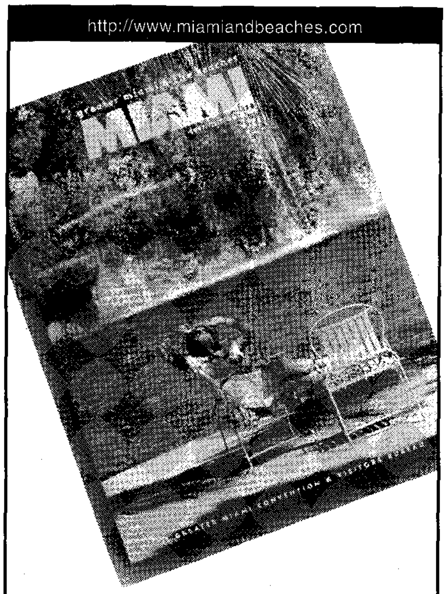

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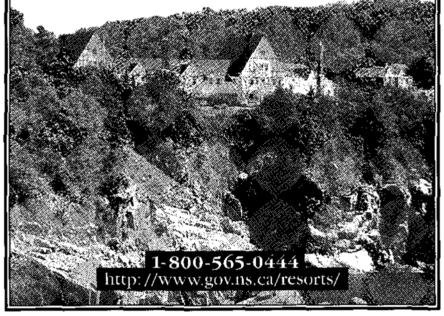

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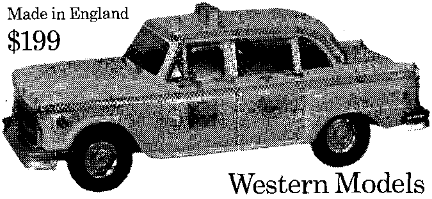

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few exceptions, this is the world Roth has been writing about all his life. "Narrative is the form that his knowledge takes," Roth says of his father in "The Facts," "and his repertoire has never been large: family, family, family, Newark, Newark, Newark, Jew, Jew, Jew. Somewhat like mine."

This is the life that Seymour Levov thinks he is not breaking with but extending when he steps out of the ethnic enclave and into what he imagines to be full-fledged Americanness. He thinks he can preserve the old values of work, family, and fair play but discard the atavistic compulsions of mindless discipline, authority, and tradition. What he is blindsided by is the culture of permissiveness. Seymour's genuine tolerance and sympathy are surrounded and subverted on all sides by the fake tolerance and sympathy of therapy, analysis, and liberationism—things as phony as the "Old" in "Old Rimrock." His patience, deference, and open-mindedness, his insistence on reasoning things out and splitting the cultural differences, have produced in Merry Levov a fanatic and a killer—"a pariah exiled in the very country where her family had triumphantly rooted itself in every possible way," as Zuckerman puts it. Seymour thought that liberalism was a form of authority, and he is made to see it as a mask for the loathing of authority. He thought that Americanness was an identity, and he is made to see it as a mask for contempt for the identities of other people. But he can't go back, because the little world he came from has been closed down, vandalized, destroyed. All the little worlds of prewar America are closed down. He is in exodus from the diaspora.

THE idea that the author of "Portnoy's Complaint"—a real-life bombshell that exploded in February of 1969, a year after Merry Levov's fictional bombshell—has written a book about the corruption of American life by the culture of liberal permissiveness is likely to make some readers wonder whether "American Pastoral" is a kind of recantation, a swerve to the cultural right. Weren't moral authoritarianism, the obsession with little-world ethnic identity, and the suffocation of family life the very oppressions Alexander Portnoy was fleeing? Isn't a novel about a man who beats off using a piece of liver his mother will shortly prepare for the family dinner about as permissive as it gets?

"Portnoy's Complaint" was a misunderstood book. When it appeared, it was attacked for lampooning its Jewish characters, but it was also attacked, and by some formidably intelligent critics, as a simplistic manifesto of sexual liberation. Its author was accused by Diana Trilling of being a "child of an indiscriminative mass culture," and its protagonist was described by Irving Howe as "a man at ease with his moment"—at ease, that is, with the insufficiently tragic culture of swinging post-Freudian sexuality. But Portnoy is not at ease with anything. He is made just as crazy by the sexual freedom he has found as he was by the sexual repressiveness he fled. He escapes from the clutches of his mother only to drop into the clutches of the Monkey. Roth didn't think that Portnoy represented liberation. He thought that *representing* Portnoy represented liberation—liberation from what he regarded as the idless stereotypes of Jewish characters in contemporary fiction, and from middlebrow notions of stylistic decorum. Roth didn't think he was escaping from Newark. He thought he was escaping from Leon Uris.

The heart of "Portnoy" is the same as the heart of "Sabbath's Theater" and "American Pastoral." It is the descriptions of the baseball games and the neighborhood life of Weequahic, the memories of what that world was like before the twin demons of enlightenment and lust made it unendurable. Portnoy's complaint is the same as Seymour Levov's. He is a prisoner of his own liberation. He stepped out, and now he is lost in America.

Has Roth turned to the cultural right? If being on the cultural right means having an old-fashioned modernist commitment to high art, Roth has always been on the cultural right. If it means being a critic of the culture of liberalism, the question is the wrong question. A modernist commitment to high art means that you are, by definition, a critic of the culture of everything. "American Pastoral" is a very different kind of book from "Portnoy's Complaint," of course. "American Pastoral" is a traditional realist novel, and "Portnoy" is a sixties performance piece. But they are both about the same irony and the same agony. One makes a comedy of authority, the other makes a tragedy of the escape from authority. The difference is a little like the difference between "Pride and Prejudice" and "Persuasion," or between "Pickwick Papers" and "Our Mutual Friend." "American Pastoral" is darker, difficult, more mature; but "Portnoy" is forever. ♦

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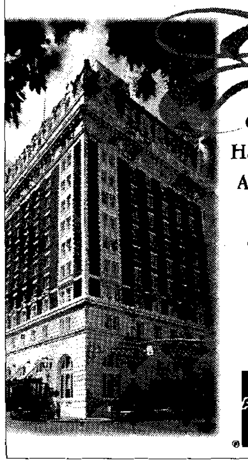

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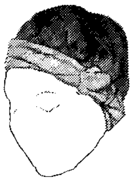

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BRIEFLY NOTED

WHEN THE SONS OF HEAVEN MEET THE DAUGHTERS OF THE EARTH, by Fernanda Eberstadt (Knopf; $25). While Mr. Gebler, the father of three, is schmoozing, drinking, and having affairs, Mrs. Gebler, who has the money, is running both the family business—an art foundation—and the family. When Isaac Hooker, a sometimes homeless would-be artist from New Hampshire, meets this family, he falls in love with all of them. Eberstadt's book is profligate in its worldliness, offering pinpoint-accurate renditions of every art-world and high-society idiom, and then some. But, after all the eye-and-ear candy, one is disappointed to find that even the main characters seem to have been recruited to pronounce upon one another, as if judgmental art reviews were the paradigm for life.

THE SOLDIERS' TALE: BEARING WITNESS TO MODERN WAR, by Samuel Hynes (Penguin; $24.95). Hynes taught literature for many years, and is the author of a superb war memoir, "Flights of Passage." Here he examines accounts of twentieth-century combat with a keenly literary appreciation, but he is mainly interested in what Tolstoy called "the reality of war, the actual killing," and he is unembarrassed by the fact that many men do like war. This frank book is exemplary in its compassion.

THE DREAM ENDURES: CALIFORNIA ENTERS THE 1940S, by Kevin Starr (Oxford; $35). The fifth volume of Starr's superlative history "Americans and the California Dream" traces trends that evolved or survived in California during the nineteen-thirties—outdoor barbecuing, collecting Asian art—and then spread to the rest of the nation. California's inclusiveness certainly expresses something of America: in those years, you could find Iowa picnics in Long Beach and *Mitteleuropa* in Hollywood, where refugees were writing American movies and Books of the Month.

THE UNIVERSE BELOW, by William J. Broad; illustrations by Dimitry Schidlovsky (Simon & Schuster; $30). A volcanic gash in the ocean floor surrounded by tube worms, heat-loving microbes, and a stray Reebok; deep-sea shipwrecks; squids with flesh so translucent that they tremble "on the verge of disappearance"—these sights were largely inaccessible until recently, when the end of the Cold War freed up money and technology for marine research. Broad's compilation of oceanic exploration and exploitation is sometimes daunting, but his sense of wonderment is almost always infectious.

THE LETTERS OF NANCY MITFORD AND EVELYN WAUGH, edited by Charlotte Mosley (Houghton Mifflin; $40). "How I *shrieked*"—with glee, with horror, with amusement—Nancy Mitford writes to Evelyn Waugh countless times during a twenty-odd-year correspondence that began in 1946 and ended only with Waugh's death. In this splendidly entertaining, extravagantly funny, and ultimately sobering volume, Mosley, through mordant use of footnotes, has pulled off a feat equal to the best work of her subjects: a book that for all its fits of laughter is really a cogent, minutely observed social history.

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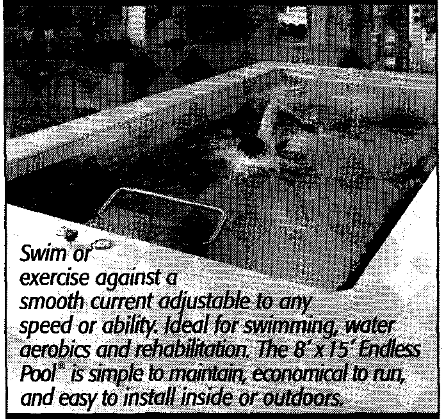

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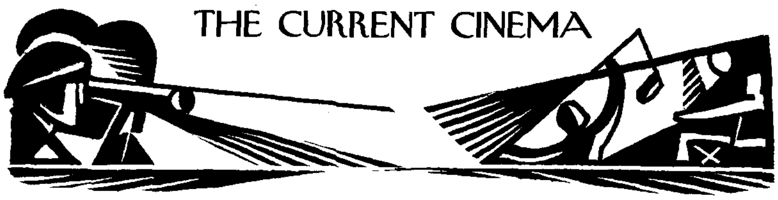

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"Fathers' Day," and "The Designated Mourner."

BY TERRENCE RAFFERTY

ROBIN WILLIAMS and Billy Crystal are two of the funniest men in American movies, so everyone who buys a ticket to Ivan Reitman's "Fathers' Day," in which they co-star, is bound to anticipate two hours of huge, explosive laughs. As it turns out, the comedians have sensibly refrained from trying to live up to the viewers' expectations and have concentrated instead on blending their distinct comic styles as smoothly as they can. They work together very gracefully here, each adapting himself to the other's rhythm and politely declining to hog the spotlight, and both obviously enjoying being part of a well-tuned, quietly efficient comedy team. This mellow, soft-shoe approach isn't unpleasant, but as "Fathers' Day" goes along the stars' relaxed craftsmanship becomes a little frustrating: the movie itself is so warm and cozy and leisurely that you yearn for Williams and Crystal to stop being so professional and responsible—to do something that might disturb its placid surface.

The basic problem with "Fathers' Day," which is a remake of a poky, tolerably entertaining French comedy called "Les Compères" (1983), is that its humor is fatally compromised by baby-boomer sentimentality about parenting. The two main characters, Jack Lawrence (Crystal) and Dale Putley (Williams), are both childless men who are suddenly awakened to the joys and trials of fatherhood. In the opening scenes, a sixteen-year-old boy (played by Charlie Hofheimer) runs away, and his mother (Nastassja Kinski), desperate to find him, enlists the aid of two old flames, Jack and Dale: she tells each of them that he is the runaway's father. Jack, a successful lawyer working on his third marriage, has never wanted children, and Dale—single, nervous, and suicidal—isn't ideally equipped for fatherhood: he's a big baby himself. But the men join forces to look for the missing boy, and eventually, in the manly spirit of competition, each starts *wanting* to be the father; when they get their hands on the puzzled teen-ager, they immediately begin scanning him for clues to his paternity. The screenplay, by Lowell Ganz and Babaloo Mandel (who also wrote "Parenthood"), uses the comic situation to release Jack's suppressed parental urges and to revive Dale's hopes for the future; the boy is happily reunited with his mother and his real father, who now understands him better. Although the fuzzy family values of "Fathers' Day" don't entirely spoil the fun, they certainly put a damper on it; the picture has the structure and the lulling tempo of a TV sitcom of the "Home Improvement" type, alternating punch lines and piety.

Like Reitman's last movie, "Junior," in which Arnold Schwarzenegger played a pregnant man, "Fathers' Day" subordinates comic momentum to what the director would probably call the emotional arc of the characters; i.e., their progress toward the profound fulfillment of parenthood. Reitman was a lot funnier when he was letting the overgrown kids of "National Lampoon's Animal House" (which he produced) and of "Stripes" and "Ghostbusters" (both of which he produced and directed) run wild. Has parenting drained his energy? The Perry Como-ish languor of Reitman's current style seems to have slightly dulled the edge of his stars' inventiveness, too. Williams has a few inspired outbursts of lunacy—the best, perhaps, being his impromptu performance of the opening number from an unproduced musical called "Hello Doctor, Is It Still Swollen?" But mostly he and his co-star confine themselves to deft, familiar odd-couple routines: Williams, the loose cannon of the team,

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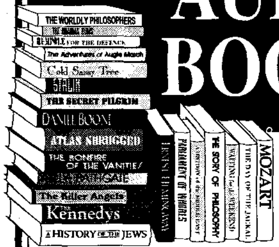

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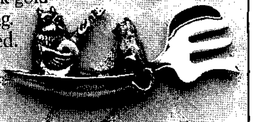

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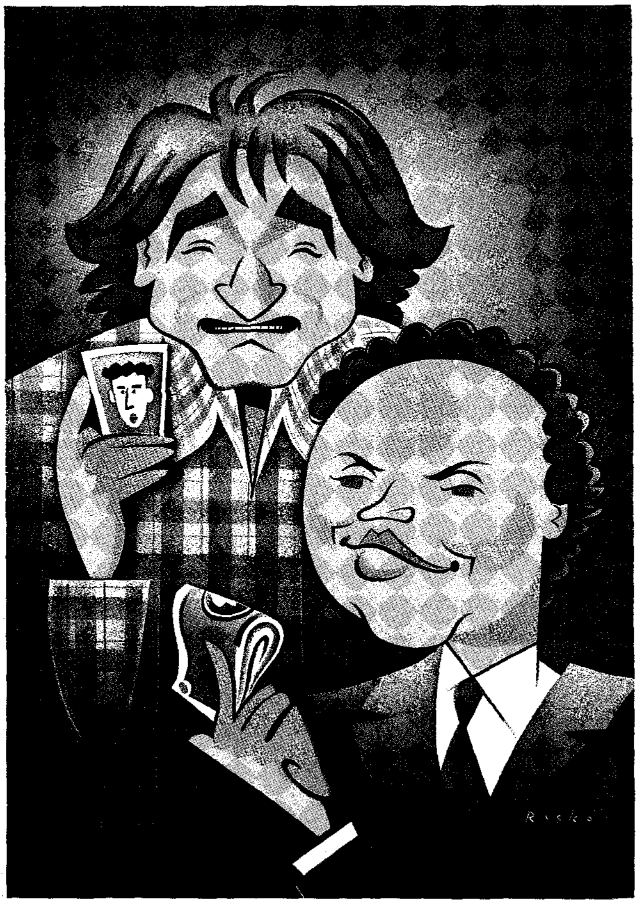
does something stupid, and Crystal, pursing his lips, delivers a perfect exasperation take or an impeccably timed one-liner. The humor is pitched to the level of an amiable family dinner, and, although it may sound childish to express disappointment with the small pleasures that "Fathers' Day" provides, I can't help thinking that these two great comics are poorly served by the picture's even-temperedness and its domestic respectability. Family values are fine, in their place, but this is the wrong place. Parenthood is about responsibility; comedy isn't.

THE main character of "The Designated Mourner" is a lapsed intellectual named Jack (Mike Nichols), who, in long passages of direct address to the audience, explains the process by which he has transformed himself from an insecure highbrow into an oddly contented lowbrow—how, that is, he has managed to empty his spirit of aspiration and human feeling, and to narrow his expectations to the single, simple animal comfort of survival. As Nichols plays this apparently monstrous character, Jack is often charming and, at times, surprisingly persuasive: Wallace Shawn, the author of "The Designated Mourner," supplies his alarming creation with speeches that make Jack's self-diminishing philosophy seem almost reasonable. (Shawn tends to construct his works as rigorous, perverse exercises in devil's advocacy; in his 1985 play, "Aunt Dan and Lemon," for instance, the heroine is a shockingly articulate Fascist.) No matter how effectively the protagonist pleads his case, though, we know he can't win, because "The Designated Mourner" is itself so obviously a highbrow product. The movie records, austerely, the original stage production of Shawn's play, in which there is no dramatic action per se, no physical contact and virtually no dialogue among Jack and the two characters with whom he shares the stage—his wife, Judy (Miranda Richardson), and her father, Howard (David de Keyser)—and no movement within the claustrophobic theatrical space: the characters are seated at a table, a few feet apart, and never show even the slightest inclination to get up and stretch their legs. This stark, minimal staging—the film, like the play, is directed by David Hare—is clearly not intended to seduce the "lowbrow," who is, in Jack's words, "someone who you might say took the easy way in the cultural sphere."



An odd couple: Robin Williams and Billy Crystal team up for a comedy about fatherhood.

Shawn and Hare are committed to the hard way, and their aesthetic rigor tangles them in an inescapable cultural paradox: their methods are those of provocateurs, but their audience consists, inevitably, of liberal, educated types, who *expect* art to provoke them—who pride themselves on their open-mindedness, the flexibility that allows them to meet the sternest intellectual challenges. "The Designated Mourner," to its credit, works hard at jolting this audience out of its complacent sense of itself. Howard, a famous poet who is being persecuted by a repressive government, and his adoring daughter are, in fact, not very attractive spokespeople for the high-culture crowd: they're smug, haughty, and self-congratulatory, and, although we recognize an element of sour grapes in Jack's diatribes against them, his complaints frequently ring true. Compared with these solemn prigs, Jack strikes us as refreshingly honest and down to earth. And that impression is reinforced by the performances: Nichols's extraordinary and seemingly effortless mastery of speech rhythms provides, throughout the film, a welcome relief from the studied readings of de Keyser and—especially—Richardson (who is, as always, brittle and dislikable). But, despite Nichols's virtuosity and the sometimes diabolical cleverness of Shawn's writing, there's never a possibility, really, that we might *sympathize* with Jack, see anything of ourselves in his laziness and his cowardice. We may find him amusing, or repellent, or, in his final, hollowed-out state, poignant. It's always evident, though, that his salient feature is precisely his ambiguity; and that, in a way, is a comfort to us brow-furrowing viewers, because we understand this ambiguity as a necessary component of the aesthetic experience—as a mark not of the human animal but of the purely literary creature.

The film ends in irony: Jack, who has rejected the values of Howard and Judy and their class, is, in the brutalizing society that has systematically eliminated them, the only person left to mourn their passing. "It suddenly hit me," he says, "that everyone on earth who could read John Donne was now dead." The audience—dutifully registering the nuances of lighting changes, and luxuriating in the hushed, elegiac mood—pauses to contemplate this vision of its own fate and to savor the pleasure of getting the writer's small irony. This is surely not the reaction Shawn meant to evoke: in casting his ideas in the form of a monster's apologia, he must have intended to shake us up—to disturb our certainties as, say, Camus does in "The Fall." But "The Designated Mourner" leaves us pretty much as we were: listening to a bell that tolls for someone else, and appreciating it for its music. ♦

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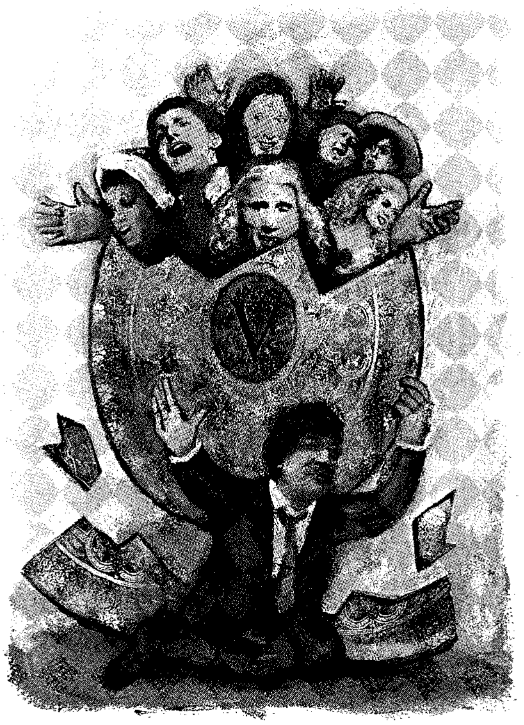
Voltaire's classic gaudily revived, and a welcome "Little Foxes."

BY JOHN LAHR

NOBODY can say that Voltaire didn't suffer for his wit. He was imprisoned in the Bastille for apparently spoofing the Regent, throttled by a courtier's henchman for his ridicule, and exiled from Paris for his acid thoughts about church and state. In the course of three weeks in 1758, at the age of sixty-four, he wrote his picaresque novella "Candide; or, Optimism," which was a belly laugh at the Enlightenment notion of a harmonious Christian universe. Now, in Hal Prince's revival of the revival of the revised Leonard Bernstein–Lillian Hellman–Richard Wilbur 1956 musical version of "Candide" (at the Gershwin), *we* are made to suffer for Voltaire's wit.

The musical "Candide" is against every "ism" except commercialism. Here spectacle substitutes for satire. The drama of the musical is not the expense of Candide's spirit but the spirit of "Candide" 's expense. The massive two-thousand-seat auditorium is turned into a gaudy carnival sideshow: the walls of the orchestra are filled with painted panels of Candide's adventures and of the continents that the credulous, lovelorn hero travels in pursuit of his beloved, the frequently raped Cunegonde. The set, designed by Clarke Dunham in hues of muted blue, red, green, and crimson, is itself a huge, ugly hodgepodge of carnival clutter, dominated by a fairground sign propped up on candy-cane poles and broadcasting "Dr. Voltaire's Freaks and Wonders"; in the foreground, on both sides of the stage, are double-decker carnival wagons, one of which houses a calliope that turns out, significantly, to produce no sound. In the background, a cardboard public leans forward in its seats as if at a tent show and stares out into mostly unutilized space.

"Candide" begins well enough, with the rambunctious elegance of Bernstein's wonderful overture, which he called a valentine to European music. The music holds out the promise of talent and caprice—a bold assertion of Bernstein's credo that "man's capacity for laughter is nobler than his divine gift of suffering." Then two rearing pantomime horses appear and pull the overcostumed and overmiked cast into view. We are in the slaphappy world of burlesque, but without an iota of anarchy or inspiration. Voltaire himself is produced from another part of the show's rolling stock, and from almost the first beat of the first song, "Life Is Happiness Indeed," "Candide" starts to wheeze like a party balloon deflating. The song itself, a journeyman job by Stephen



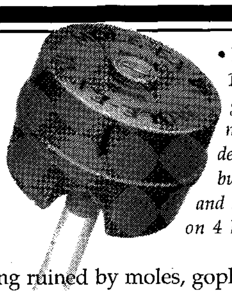
The producer Garth Drabinsky with the cast of a carnivalesque "Candide."

Sondheim, who contributed a few other lacklustre numbers to the revised hokum, is meant to solve part of the problem of Voltaire's sprawling story by introducing the main characters with a wash of attitude. The lyric unwittingly acknowledges the show's cumbersome narrative problem. As the Old Lady (the expert Andrea Martin, who actually knows a laugh and how to get it) sings in her Polish accent:

> Life is Happiness
> —Or not—
> Let's get goink vith the plot.

But it takes a long time to wind up this musical fun machine. Hugh Wheeler's dishevelled book—a revue disguised as a romp, with no emotional or thematic progression—focusses first on Voltaire and then on the Pollyannaish tutor Dr. Pangloss, and finally gets around to the eponymous hero, whom the late Wolcott Gibbs called in these pages "one of the great imbeciles in literature," who "surely deserves all the dreadful things that happen to him." A quarter of an hour passes before Candide's story actually gets under way, but by then the audience hardly cares. The Old Lady turns out to be prophetic. "I'm no singer, but I esk you," she sings at the opening, "When the story's getting boring / Who'll be coming to the rescue?" In this production, the answer is the producer, Garth Drabinsky, who is the deep-pocketed chairman of Livent, Inc. The show makes speed the correlative of Voltaire's giddy disenchantment: Prince and Drabinsky—the general and his treasury—send their recostumed cast into scene after scene, like foot soldiers into the trenches, trying to overwhelm the audience with bigger and bigger effects.

Voltaire's joke is about man's capacity for denial. Candide clings to the belief that this is "the best of all possible worlds" and "everything will turn out right," but he bears witness to greed, rape, corruption, and murder, some of it by his own hand. Candide doesn't see the barbarity in himself or in the world. Likewise, this production seems unaware that it has laid a Fabergé egg. It doesn't hear how the metallic sound of the orchestra muddies the scintillating humor of Bernstein's score; in its gargantuan ambition, the production doesn't even listen to the wisdom of its own script. "Never seek for greatness," says Dr. Pangloss (Jim Dale, finally getting laughs at the end of the show, when, dressed like a swami, he is sus-



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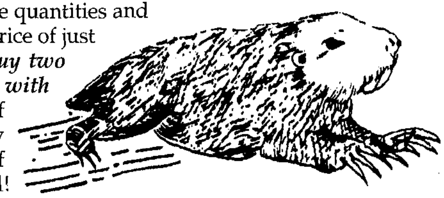

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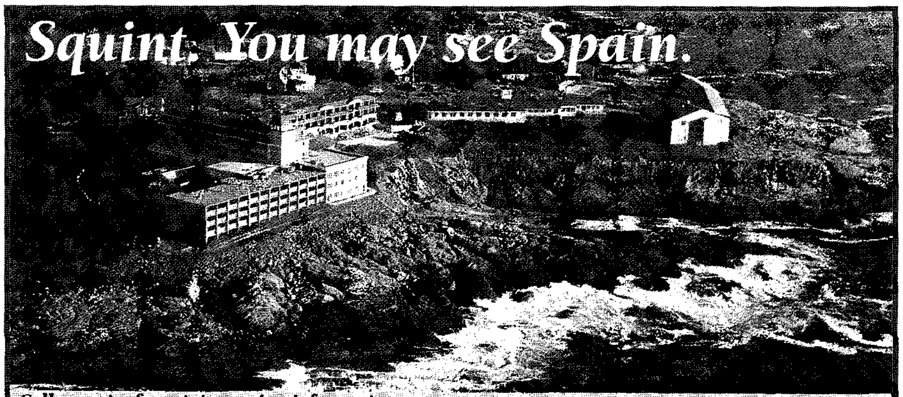

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pended by wires above the audience), "for the higher the aim the harder the fall." The production drowns out personality. Candide (the fine-voiced Jason Danieley) makes his journey by sidling through the front row, where the audience gets up close but never personal with his character. As Cunegonde, Harolyn Blackwell shows more power in her big contralto than in her presence. In her comic aria "Glitter and Be Gay," Bernstein's parody of the "Jewel Song" from Gounod's "Faust," she rocks the audience with her coloratura, only to have the bravura singing dissipated by banal comic business as she clumsily filches her accompanist's jewels.

But not all the slapstick is so lame. "I Am Easily Assimilated" (a Carmen Miranda sendup written by Bernstein and his wife, Felicia) gets deliciously silly as Andrea Martin rumbas with New World peasants, who, once they are roused from their siesta and lift their sombreros, all look like members of ZZ Top. In the folderol department, Arte Johnson, a little comic who is large on charm, wins the prize. He brings oxygen to the struggling evening every time he is killed, goosed, or stabbed. His impish, seasoned presence allows him to make a real connection to the audience, who are grateful. And at the finale Bernstein's gorgeous hymn "Make Our Garden Grow" translates the skepticism of Voltaire's *"Il faut cultiver son jardin"* into a stunning C-major affirmation. Prince has the orchestra cut out, and the cast's thrilling, full-throated a-cappella voices resound:

> We're neither pure nor wise nor good
> We'll do the best we know
> We'll build our house, and chop our wood
> And make our garden grow,
> And make our garden grow.

At the curtain call on opening night, Jim Dale stepped forward and asked the collaborators to join the cast onstage. This lap of honor seems to be de rigueur at Livent shows. One by one, the major players of the production team, led by Drabinsky himself, made their way from the audience to the stage, where they were high-fived, hugged, and applauded. It's a terrific thing to do when you have a hit, but it's unseemly when you have a miss.

LILLIAN HELLMAN, who did fourteen drafts of "Candide," called it her "most unpleasant experience in the theatre." By contrast, "The Little Foxes" (at the Vivian Beaumont), for which she did a mere nine, is probably her happiest theatrical outing: fascinating in its historical detail of the New South in 1900, cunning in its dissection of greed and sexual politics, shrewd in its commercial construction. In Regina Hubbard's machinations to shake down her brothers for a larger piece of the family pie on the brink of their new business venture (a cotton mill built with Northern money), Hellman found a metaphor for both her own seething ambition and her political concerns. "You gone stark out of your head?" are the first words of the play; of course, the characters will soon be driven crazy by their own rapacity. Here, in John Lee Beatty's handsome two-tiered Edwardian mahogany drawing room, and despite Jack O'Brien's unevenly cast production, the lineaments of the exciting chicanery and the fierce feminism underneath it come through. Hellman contrasts two different styles of Southern womanhood: that of the lost, submissive, alcoholic Birdie (the moving but not always audible Frances Conroy), who serves as a puppet of abusive patriarchy, and that of Regina, who seizes her life, as Hellman did, by playing according to the men's rules. Stockard Channing presents Regina as a steely, intelligent woman, ravished both by money and by the momentum of the new industrial age. Channing's Regina is a powerful centrifugal force, pulling away from the old Southern traditions of family, propriety, and submission—a most thoroughly modern Machiavelli, who pays for victory with her soul. "There are hundreds of Hubbards sitting in rooms like this throughout the country," the genial cynic Ben Hubbard (well played by Brian Murray) says. He adds, "And they will own this country someday."

Hellman went on to write an excellent prequel to Regina's story, "Another Part of the Forest," which, I think, is every bit as good as "Little Foxes," but which, because it was directed by the author and ran only a hundred and eighty-two performances, is rarely mounted. As a saga of the dead heart of American capitalism, it is one of the best Broadway plays about business in the national canon; I wish some enterprising theatre would play the two in repertory together, like the two parts of "Angels in America." It would be tonic for the public to be reminded that once upon a time history, not just hubbub, was the province of Broadway theatre. ♦

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SHOUTS & MURMURS

OUR PARTNERS REPORT

BY BRUCE McCALL

WASHINGTON—Administration officials acknowledged that just-revealed ties between Mexico's ousted anti-drug chief and narcotics kingpins hinder the fight against drugs.

Top Secret. As newly appointed Sergeant-Admiral of the Seventh District, I offer salutations, in no way stained by the "brouhaha" during last week's State Visit. The demand made by our Customs Police—to release President Clinton's luggage only in exchange for all confidential D.E.A. files on one "Felix the Spider"—was, of course, a routine security exercise. I enclose the President's wallet.

Meanwhile, yes! The secret Flying Brigade's élite Chihuahua Corps will sniff "Snow Mountain" outside my office to establish if it is in fact not a natural geologic formation but the four-thousand-foot cocaine pile that your agents allege. How is the Washington weather? Hot?

Confidential. Glad tidings! My disgraced predecessor, the Sergeant-Admiral, broke down in his final interview and confessed all, naming names. Next time, I vow, there will be batteries in our tape recorder! Double curses that he commandeered the Presidential air flotilla and fled to Monte Carlo.

I gratefully acknowledge receipt of the requested hundred Jet Skis for our coastal-interdiction patrols. The Señora, she is well? Re the Urgent query: it seems that your undercover agent X had filed a false video-club membership application and ran into a kennel of wild dogs while fleeing arrest.

P.S. To speak of dogs: The élite Chihuahua Corps was sold to the circus. No matter. Snow Mountain has now disappeared and only a maze of white tire tracks is left. My wife's trucking company knows nothing of this. Good riddance to an eyesore! Case closed!

Your Eyes Only. It seems that the notorious Raoul the Lizard and my despicable forerunner did borrow those Supreme Court robes and pardon themselves. I have ordered a villa-to-villa search for the missing twenty-four million (U.S.) you inquired about. The golf game comes together?

About that Human Rights Watch deposition: The corpse uncovered in my back yard had no head, and therefore obviously could not have talked to us about the alleged "angel dust factory" in the Police Academy cellar. What relief! Case closed!

If I may append a personal note—I am informed that my aunt just won the National Lottery prize of twenty-four million (U.S.) in small bills and has persuaded me to retire to Paraguay. To the struggle!

Top Urgency. I, sir, am the new Minister-Comandante. My charlatan predecessor has been transferred to a Secret Police desk job and must repay the stolen two hundred and thirty-eight million (U.S.) in five-dollar monthly installments. Case closed!

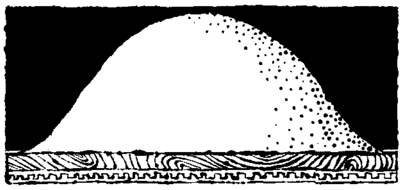
Update: Our raid last night at the Veracruz docks was a success. Thirty-six million dollars (U.S.) in confiscated drugs—aspirin, Tylenol, and Sinutab—more than offsets the fact that the so-called Black Jackal of Durango escaped house arrest and moved without leaving a forwarding address. The shipment of wall-size TVs—it will arrive here soon? A million pardons for giving your strike force the wrong date and address for the raid on King Pepe's heroin camp. All blame goes to my vanished personal secretary, now unmasked as King Pepe's mistress, the vixen Carmelita X.

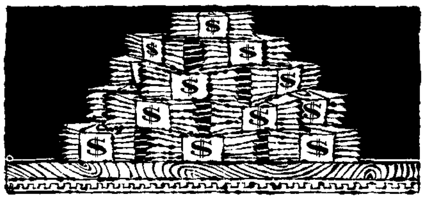
Most Private and Confidential. At midnight yesterday, I took my oath as Head Prosecutor Extraordinary. (My predecessor unexpectedly inherited a gambling casino in Reno, Nevada.) It is my pleasure to inform you that my first official act was to destroy the doctored video of myself sharing margaritas with Carmelita X, King Pepe, and the so-called Black Jackal of Durango at the President's barbecue.

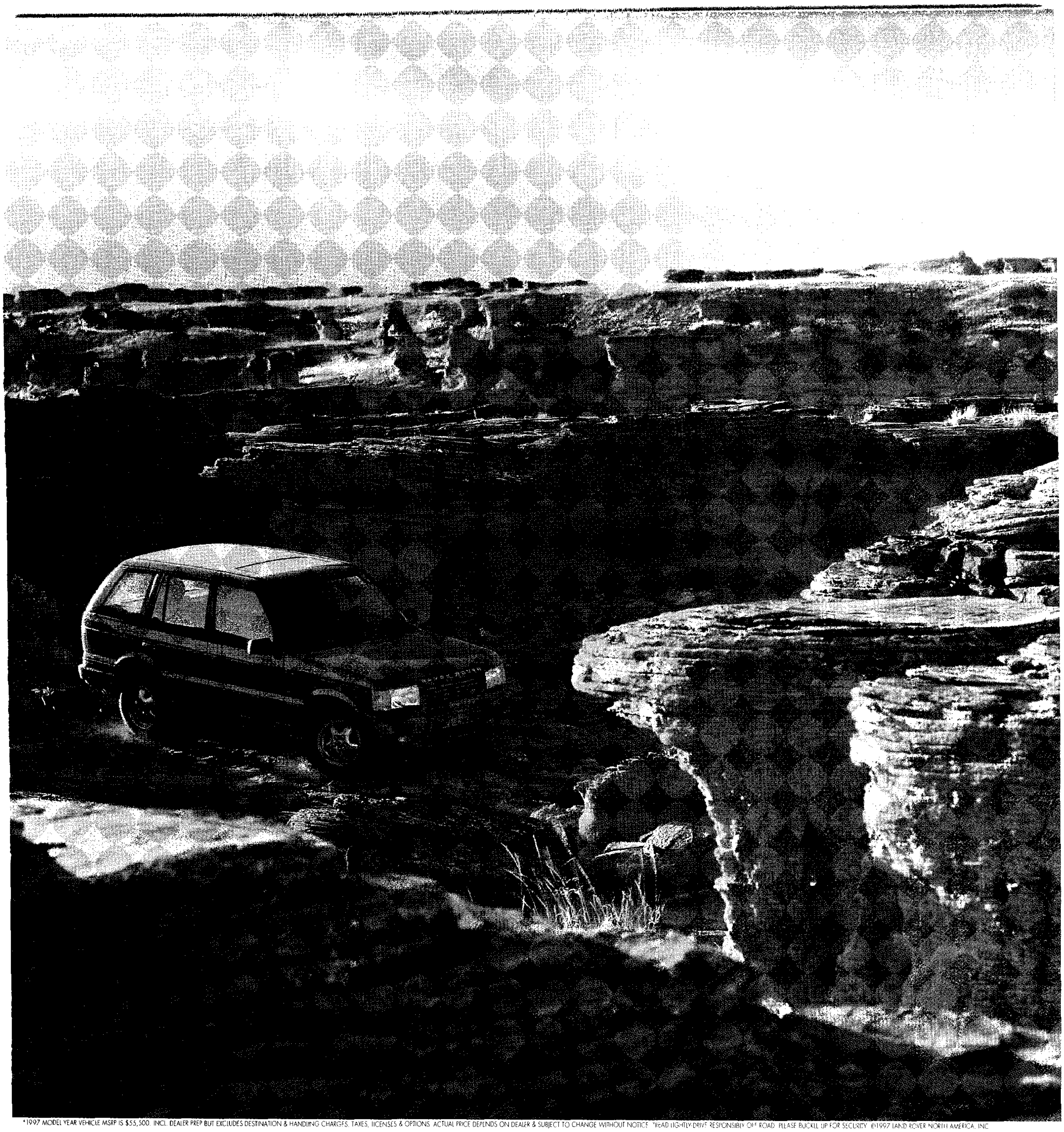
About today's front-page Washington *Post* photo: A silly misunderstanding! The "fifty-kilo cache of pure cocaine" that I appear to be placing in the trunk is, of course, flour for my beloved tortillas. Phew! Case closed!

Caramba! He certainly fooled me, too! Who would have guessed that my anti-narcotics predecessor and the Black Jackal of Durango were the same person—*and* my own brother! If only I had been able to take your telephone call!

In the event that your offices here have just blown up, accept my profound apology. The demolition company has been given the incorrect address. Another case closed! Your Baltimore Orioles, they thrive? ♦







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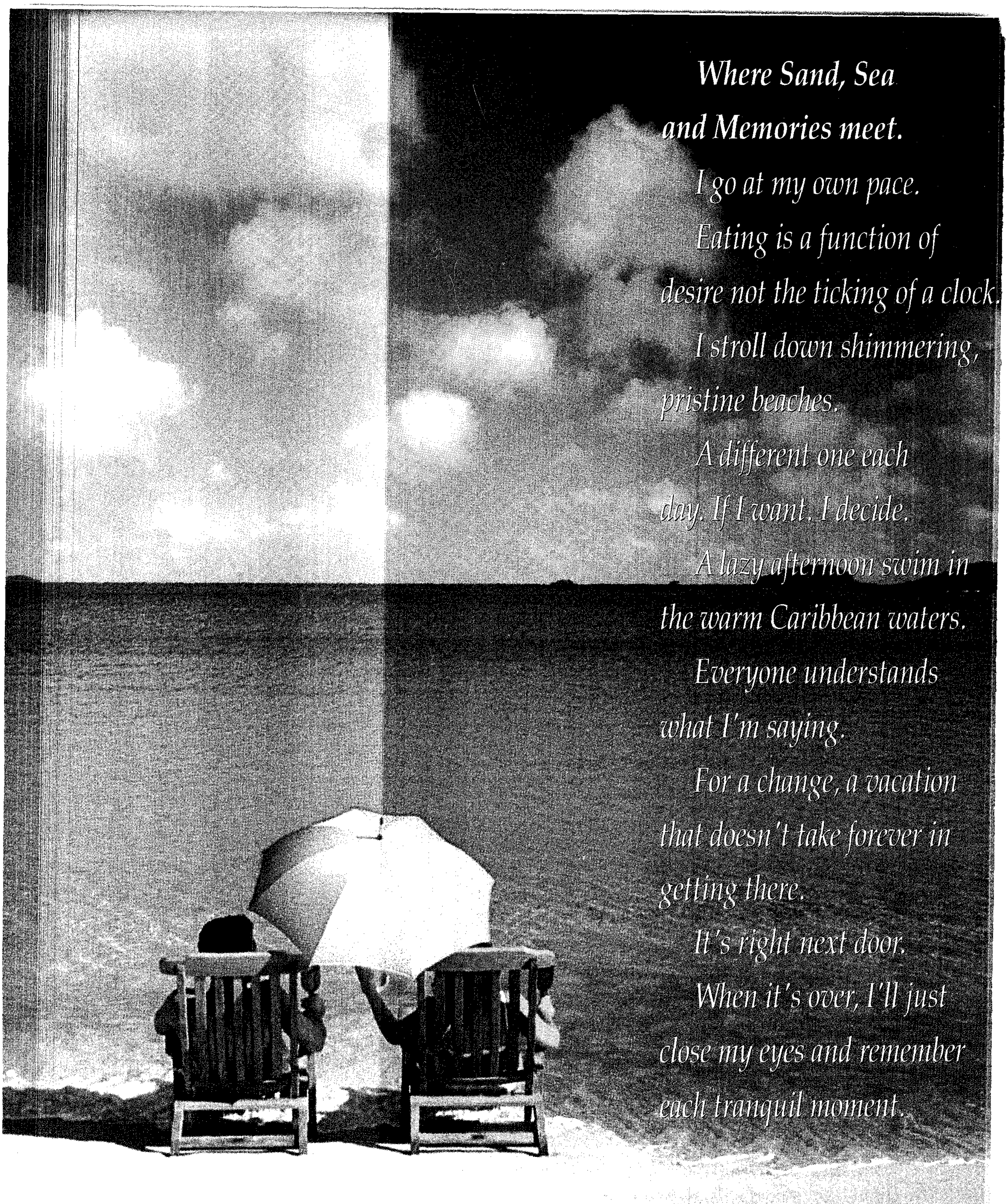

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